THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

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THOMAS DE QUINCEY:

HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS.

With Unpublished Correspondence.

BY

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"FABLES FOR OLD AND YOUNG," ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PREFACE.

DE QUINCEY had himself so fully told the story of his childhood and youth—with its dreams and strange sufferings—that something exceptionally interesting may be presumed to lie in the reading of letters and documents illustrating and confirming his "Confessions" and "Autobiographic Sketches"—letters and documents of which he could scarcely have had any thought when he was penning those memorials. The careful reader will see from the original matter in the earlier chapters of this book how correct and conscientious he was even in minor details, when he found it requisite to refer to them at all.

Such a nature as De Quincey's needs to be seen in many lights before it will reveal itself with even the degree of fulness necessary to consistent interpretation. I have been much helped in my endeavour in this direction by the great kindness of Mrs. Baird Smith and Miss de Quincey, who have afforded me free access to his papers now in their possession, and rendered me such aid as I cannot fully signalise

here, though the book throughout will be found to present the proofs of it. Nor can I believe that the "Reminiscences" by Mr. James Hogg, who was so intimately associated with De Quincey in the closing years of his life, will fail to be read with interest, on account of their freshness, and the new view in some aspects that they give us of De Quincey. The same, I trust, may be said of Mr. Jacox's Recollections, and of Dr. Warburton Begbie's account of "The Last Days." Scientific students, and those interested in psychological investigations, will, no doubt, turn with special interest to Dr. Eatwell's paper on the "Medical View of De Quincey's Case," in the Appendix, which he has kindly written at the request of Mrs. Baird Smith. The story of the life, as I think, was worth being completely told: whether I have done it justice is a question for others to decide.

I have to thank Mr. Carlyle for the privilege of printing his letter at p. 278, vol. i. For valuable help and hints, in the progress of my work, which may not appear in the work itself, I have also to thank E. L. Lushington, Esq., LL.D., Professor J. Nichol, LL.D., Professor Veitch, LL.D., the Rev. W. H. Wylie, and other friends.

H. A. PAGE.

LONDON, *March* 1877.

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THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

DE QUINCEY himself, in descanting on the Dream-faculty, says, "Habitually to dream magnificently, a man must have a constitutional determination to reverie." In that sentence he announces the true law of all literature that comes under the order of pure phantasy. But in his case, in spite of the strength of the dream-element, we cannot proceed far till we discover that his determination to reverie was but the extreme projection of one phase of a phenomenal nature balancing its opposite. He was also shrewd, observant, master of a fine humour that demanded contact with life for its free exercise. From a nice examination of details he was under an inborn necessity to rise to the principle that relates them, linking the disparate together; deeply interested in the most practical and dry of studies—political economy. He was skilled in the exercises of the analytic understanding—a logician exacting and precise—else his dreaming had never gained for him

the eminence it has gained. Surely it is calculated to strike the most casual reader on a perusal of that first edition of the "Confessions," that his powers of following up sensational effects and tracing with absolute exactness the most delicately varying shades of experience, and recording them with conscientious precision, were as noticeable as were the dreams to which they served to give effect. No proper ground has been laid for a liberal and sympathetic appreciation of De Quincey till these points have been clearly apprehended; and assuredly this is one of the cases where, as he himself has well said, "not to sympathise is not to understand."

One of the most tempting problems for criticism in reference to De Quincey would be to find out how these varied elements influenced and reacted on each other—a point on which we may elsewhere have something to say. But we cannot be wrong in urging at the very outset, that to isolate one development of a mind which was active in many directions, must prove as misleading to those who are guilty of it as it is unjust to the subject. It is by way of guarding ourselves from misapprehension at the start that we make this statement, because criticism must reduce the personality to a series of parts before it can reconstruct them into unity. It is well that we shall be able to present a narrative before any serious effort is made in this direction, so that facts themselves may qualify any disproportion. While we proceed to speak especially of the Dreaming power in De Quincey for a moment, it must be understood that it is with full perception of the qualifying elements with which it was allied.

What we are first of all concerned to make clear in reference to it is that De Quincey did not become a dreamer because he fell under the "Circean spell of opium," but rather that he fell under the spell of opium because of the excessive sensibility, that created for him a world in which, in a very special sense, he walked apart with creatures of his own creation—the images or shadows of those whom he had met and loved and lost. Every person that had come close enough to his sympathy was soon translated into an atmosphere of dream, whose presence immediately penetrated his views of life and of nature, imparting to all a shadowy spirituality and pathetic pomp of colouring. It was because of this element that his sympathy with Wordsworth and his insight into that great poet's purposes were at once so keen and so true; but this excessive sensibility, accompanied as it was with sensuous perceptions unduly exacting, rendered him dependent on the periodical gratification of certain senses or appetites. What he said of Lamb may with far greater expressness be applied to himself: "The sensibility of his organisation was so exquisite that effects which travel by separate stages with most other men, in him fled along the nerves with the velocity of light;" but it should be added that they levied a heavy tax on the vital powers, which could only be resuscitated by certain sensuous agencies. He himself repeatedly tells how essential had become to him the gratification of the ear by music, and this was but one of the forms in which his nature craved relief and strengthening. He frankly confesses that he was a Hedonist or Eudæmonist—that is, a seeker

of pleasure. But in his case the pleasure, if sensuous in its forms, was valued for the poetical or spiritual suggestions with which they were charged; so that if we must accept his own words in this matter, it is with the clear qualification that he was a refined and spiritual seeker of pleasure. He frankly writes:—

"I confess it as a besetting infirmity of mine, that I am too much of an Eudæmonist; I hanker too much after a state of happiness both for myself and others: I cannot face misery, whether my own or not, with an eye of sufficient firmness; and am little capable of encountering present pain for the sake of any reversionary benefit."

It is to be noted, too, that in this frank confession he does in no way disconnect himself from his fellows—a point which deserves to be specially dwelt on, as it shows how his love of solitude was qualified by keen vicarious interests in ordinary cares, pains, and losses. His abstractive tendency, his absorption in his ideal world, his shy retiring from contact with the rough front of actual affairs, did not, as in the case of many secluded dreamers and idealists, cause him to be discontented, peevish, and impatient, persecuted with an egotistic itch for self-utterance, or for outward changes and reforms. On the contrary, his dreamy abstraction was associated with the utmost geniality, patience, a true sympathy with moods and habits the most alien from his own. He is, in spite of some tendencies often allied with morbidity, very far from morbid. He is a philosopher, as he claims to be; but, as we have said, he is so far an idealist, and carries his own atmosphere

with him; throwing over every creature with whom he comes into close contact the mantle of a gracious tolerance, in which defects were softened or obtrusive faults condoned; and not seldom, by the very consideration and humane concession which this habitually prompted, he drew sweet waters where bitter streams might have flowed. One of the most expressive and touching examples of this was the kindness he received from his rough fellow-passenger on the top of the coach on that fruitless journey to Eton, in the hope of gaining Lord Westport's aid to negotiate an advance on security of his expectations.

"The case was this: for the first four or five miles from London I annoyed my fellow-passenger on the roof by occasionally falling against him when the coach gave a lurch to his side; and indeed if the road had been less smooth and level than it is, I should have fallen from weakness. Of this annoyance he complained heavily, as perhaps in the circumstances most people would; he expressed his complaint, however, more morosely than the occasion seemed to warrant; and if I had parted with him at that moment, I should have thought of him (if I had considered it worth while to think of him at all) as a surly and almost brutal fellow. However, I was conscious that I had given him some cause for complaint; and therefore I apologised to him, and assured him I would do what I could to avoid falling asleep for the future; and at the same time, in as few words as possible, I explained to him that I was ill and in a weak state from long suffering; and that I could not afford at that time to take an inside place. The man's manner changed, upon hearing

this explanation, in an instant; and when I next awoke for a minute from the noise and lights of Hounslow (for in spite of my wishes and efforts I had fallen asleep again within two minutes from the time I had spoken to him), I found that he had put his arm round me to protect me from falling off: and for the rest of my journey he behaved to me with the gentleness of a woman, so that at length I almost lay in his arms; and this was the more kind, as he could not have known that I was not going the whole way to Bath or Bristol."

Such experiences seemed to justify the philosophy on which he claims to have acted as deeming no human creature beneath his interest and his kindness; for we find him exclaiming even of the earlier London sufferings:

"Thank God! even in those years I needed not the embellishments of novel accessories to conciliate my affections. Plain human nature, in its humblest and most homely apparel, was enough for me." He is full of sympathy; his heart goes out at the slightest call of weakness, suffering, or grief; and he invariably lifts the object to his own level, and surrounds it with the radiant light of his own sensibilities.

And paradoxical as it may seem to say it, this vein of kindly common-sense philosophy in De Quincey, dreamer as he was, and persecuted by over-fine sensibilities, went along with a vein of the Conservative John Bull, to which he owed not a little. How this came to consist with the other elements in his constitution is another of the inscrutable puzzles of character and temperament, presenting us in his works with the most con-

tradictory phenomena; and some attempt may farther on be made critically to deal with it. We may here say, however, that to it we owe his love of the open air, his need for exercise, and his *appreciation* even of some forms of sport—which doubtless it was, almost as much as his ingenuity and learning, and the suggestiveness and originality of his conversation, that fitted him to be for years the close daily companion of Christopher North. To it we owe also, perhaps in a still more intimate and special sense, his reverence for old English institutions, the Church of England in particular, and also his ready appreciation of human character, no less than his tendency to subordinate the picturesque, or striking aspects of nature *in themselves*, to common human interests and the ordinary concerns of life.

De Quincey had faults, many faults, some frailties, even; but, we take it, he who sees farthest will be inclined to censure least. He was often unpunctual to engagements; though courteous in the extreme, he did sometimes speak plainly, in spite of what a writer of some repute has named "a general weakness of the moral nature." It is so easy to be severe; and not seldom severity comes of incomplete and hasty surveys. We admit that De Quincey might often have written with more rigour and compactness; and have exercised more self-denial and self-suppression. He himself knew this well, and never sought to palliate his offences. This, for example, is one most touching record of this kind: "In 1824 I had come up to London upon an errand of itself sufficiently vexatious—of fighting against pecuniary embarrassments, by literary labours; but, as had always hap-

pened hitherto, with very imperfect success, through derangement of one organ. . . . It was rare indeed that I could satisfy my own judgment, even tolerably, with the quality of any literary article I produced: and my power to make sustained exertions drooped in a way I could not control, every other hour of the day, insomuch, that what with parts to be cancelled, and what with whole days of torpor and pure defect of power to produce anything at all, very often it turned out that all my labours were barely sufficient (sometimes not sufficient) to meet the current expenses of my residence in London."

But if he had written differently, we are not sure that he would have written better, or that his additions to literature would have been more valuable—at all events, so far as they are autobiographic. If he regarded too little the value of what is called a popular style, and steeped his writings too often in the aroma of reverie, that has the advantage of presenting to those who read them in the true mood a most suggestive, if informal, biography. And then, assuredly, perfect characters are not tempting in biography. The interest of a life lies in the difficulties that disturbed its even tenor, in the efforts made to conquer defects, inherited or induced, habits long-formed and persistent. De Quincey's life will be found to exhibit a double drama—first, a conflict with constitutional weakness, due to inherited disease, and strong habits superimposed upon it; and next, a contest against poverty and outward ill-fortune. In the subtle intertwistings of these the record is almost unique, full of the pathos that inseparably connects itself with the sense of some

tragical fatality, such as is most often to be found in fictions of the first order. But some degree of sympathy is a pre-requisite. Without qualification these words may be applied to De Quincey himself:—

"To understand in the fullest sense either the gaiety or the tenderness of a particular passage, you must have some insight into the peculiar bias of the writer's mind, whether native and original, or impressed gradually by the accidents of situation; whether simply developed out of predispositions by the action of life, or violently scorched into the constitution by some fierce fever of calamity. There is in modern literature a whole class of writers, though not a large one, standing within the same category; some marked originality in the character of the writer becomes a co-efficient with what he says to a common result; you must sympathise with this *personality* in the author before you can appreciate the most significant part of his views. In most books the writer figures as a mere abstraction, without sex or age, or local station, whom the reader banishes from his thoughts. . . . We read a Physiology, and need no information about the life and conversation of its author; a meditative poem becomes far better understood by the light of such information; but a work of genial and at the same time eccentric sentiment, wandering into untrodden paths, is barely intelligible without it."

While fully and frankly acknowledging all that could be urged against him for actions that, in the eye of worldly prudence, could not be otherwise characterised than as simple or foolish—his lack of calculation, his odd, erratic ways, and his utter in-

capacity practically to face certain conditions, or to deal with certain types of character, all exaggerated by his excessive indulgences in opium,—there yet remain elements of supreme attraction, which gain upon one the more that they are studied. One of the finest traits probably to be found in any man who has risen to a high rank in literature is that De Quincey was absolutely, from first to last, untouched by the vulgar desire for fame. If he added real and permanent treasures to English literature, as we believe he did, then we owe them to adverse circumstances, and not to his desire to secure a place amongst the great names of his country. And here arises a point which we deem it due to ourselves and to him to urge with all the emphasis that we can command. It is in one aspect *the* lesson of his life. He was driven at a comparatively early age into the hard competitions of literary and journalistic life in London. He had no craving for publicity. It had often struck those who had met him with keenest surprise that a man who had mastered so much, and who had already projected great works, felt so absolutely satisfied with secret self-expression. Up to the year 1818, he had not published a single line, save with one notable exception, testifying to friendly devotion, of which we shall speak in the proper place. His "Confessions" were written under the sharp spur of necessity alone. His small patrimony, owing to his own almost reckless liberalities and his lack of worldly wisdom, had been extensively broken in upon. He was forced to make efforts to secure a livelihood for wife and children. The sufferings of early days had led to his yielding himself to opium

while yet a young man. His sense of duty to his family it was that impelled him to persevere in his great effort to break himself off the habit, which he did, if not absolutely, yet in such a degree as enabled him to write what editors would buy. He never piqued himself upon a strong will, but, on the contrary, by inference, if not directly, acknowledged its weakness. A sympathetic student, then, can hardly fail to be moved to some admiration of this confessed Hedonist, whose worst enemies were those of his own household—overfine sensibilities, and constitutional habits of mind not readily yielding themselves to the line of marketable literature—who did watch his moods, so as to have in some measure succeeded in a purpose that seemed hopeless. Realise, however vaguely, the besetting temperamental incapacity for sustained exertion on solid work, the propensity to reverie, the added enfeeblements of frame induced by excessive opium-indulgences, and his life cannot but be viewed with some sympathy. His visionary power, his fine fancy, his wide knowledge, his rare humour, taken together with his true kindliness, his wide and yet strongly individual interests, present a combination of qualities which could hardly be conceived to exist in one man. If we could tell his story aright, even so far as it is susceptible of being told, we feel certain that few readers could fail to be touched by it.

Whatever might, from certain points of view, be urged as to "the weakness of the moral nature," the interest of a profound inward struggle—psychologically attractive in the highest sense—is not lacking. We see the dreaming faculty at first aided and

stimulated by the opium which in turn paralysed the judgment and the will; and the effort is put forth over and over again to escape, and to reinstate the will in its true place. De Quincey says in an earlier writing:—

"The fact is, that *twice* I mastered it, and by efforts even more prodigious in the second of these cases than in the first. But one error I committed in both. I did not connect with the abstinence from opium, so trying to the fortitude under *any* circumstances, that enormity of exercise which (as I have since learned), is the one sole resource for making it endurable. I overlooked, in those days, the one *sine qua non* for making the triumph permanent. Twice I sank, twice I rose again. A third time I sank, partly from oversight as to exercise, partly from other causes, on which it avails not now to trouble the reader. I could moralise, if I chose; and perhaps *he* will moralise, whether I choose it or not. But, in the meantime, neither of us is acquainted properly with the circumstances of the case; I, from natural bias of judgment, not altogether acquainted; and he (with his permission) not at all."

And in the latest writing of all in which he touches on the subject of opium, he tells us:—

"After I had become a regular opium-eater, and from mismanagement had fallen into miserable excesses in the use of opium, I did, nevertheless, four several times contend against and renounce it; renounced it for long intervals; and finally resumed it upon the warrant of my enlightened and deliberate judgment, as being of two evils by very much the least. In this I acknowledge nothing that calls for excuse. I

repeat again and again, that not the application of opium, with its deep tranquillising powers, to the mitigation of evils bequeathed by my London hardships, is what reasonably calls for sorrow, but that extravagance of childish folly which precipitated me into scenes naturally producing such hardships."

If he thus fell over and over again, he did not to the end cease the struggle; and as the result, we have a body of literature that is now classic; so subtle, graceful, and full of characteristic touches, that any of our older masters might well be pleased to acknowledge it.

This, however, is neither the place for eulogism nor for detailed criticisms; our business now is merely to present an overture, to strike a keynote, to indicate generally the point of view. If we have prepared the reader to trace in the earlier stages of this remarkable man's life the influences which afterwards became so express and powerful in his writings; to see how his fine genius was built up, appropriating its own proper nutriment from the most extraordinary and exceptional circumstances, we shall have so far succeeded in our aim, and pass on with the better heart to the pleasant task of general biographical survey.

CHAPTER II.

CHILDHOOD.

ON the occasion of an unexpected audience with royalty at Frogmore, De Quincey, then a lad of sixteen, with his young companion, Lord Westport, was amiably conversed with by George III. In the course of the interview the boy was grieved to discover that the King deemed him to be of Huguenot or French extraction; but, with more tact than most boys would have shown in the circumstances, he was bold enough to remove the impression by saying, "Please your Majesty, our family has been in England since the Conquest." And on the King asking him how he knew that, he referred to the existence of the name in old books—notably in the earliest, "The Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester"—whereupon the King, who rather prided himself on his genealogical knowledge, replied, "To be sure: I know, I know."

The De Quinceys were in origin unmistakably Norse—one of those families of restless, adventurous blood, ready to follow any worthy leader. They did join William the Norman, and as a reward, doubtless for good service, had privileges bestowed

on them, assumed a territorial distinction from the village of Quincey in Normandy, and from thence, as was to be expected of a family of such character, transplanted themselves to England in due course. There, by dint of discernment and prudent intermarriages, they rose to rank and influence. A younger branch of the family was among the earliest emigrants to New England; and, yielding to the democratic atmosphere in which they found themselves, they laid aside the aristocratic prefix, only to attach to the name of Quincey a distinction still more historical, as that of great American senators and men of letters. The squires who had made good their footing in England as proprietors of the soil, have not, from whatever cause, perpetuated themselves in that guise to our day. De Quincey himself tells us that the "last of them who enjoyed any relics whatever of that territorial domain was an elder kinsman of my father."

The De Quinceys, however, in the more peaceful pursuits of commerce, to which in later days they betook themselves, would seem to have been almost as successful as their ancestors in the stormier times of warfare. And Thomas de Quincey's father in this shared all the old good fortune, or what was perhaps more to the purpose, exhibited all the old enterprise and prudence. He was a Manchester merchant, carrying on extensive transactions with America and the West Indies. We find records of him in the course of his son's reminiscences to the effect that he was "esteemed during his life for his great integrity," was besides "a man of cultured taste, given to literary pursuits, and was himself an anony-

mous author." He had married while still young a Miss Penson, the daughter of an English officer, a woman of very marked character and rare intellectual endowments. Of her we read: "My mother, I may mention with honour, as still more highly gifted; for though unpretending to the name and honours of a *literary* woman, I shall presume to call her (what many literary women are not) an *intellectual* woman; and I believe that if ever her letters should be collected and published, they would be thought generally to exhibit as much strong and masculine sense, delivered in as pure 'mother English,' racy and fresh with idiomatic graces, as any in our language—hardly excepting those of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu."

Thomas de Quincey was the fifth child of this union, and was born in Greenheys, near Manchester, on the 15th August 1785. Three sisters and a brother were his *seniors;* and their influence on him, together with that of the circumstances of his childhood, were very marked and abiding. Greenheys was a suburb of Manchester, then particularly retired—"a rustic solitude"—forming a sort of *terminus ad quem*, beyond which was nothing but a cluster of cottages, composing the little hamlet of Greenhill. Shortly after the birth of Thomas, his father fell into such ill health that, under medical advice, he was compelled to spend nearly the whole of his time abroad. This circumstance, as may be supposed, cast a shadow over the social life of the family, and imparted to the atmosphere of the home a deep quietude, which served to add to its isolation. But the boy did not need the help of the ordinary

stimulants to develop his faculties. While a mere infant, according to his own account, he was so influenced by certain aspects of nature, and so possessed by the remembrance of majestic dreams, that in the ordinary sense he can scarcely be said to have had any childhood—his mind, as it were, unfolding into flower without the gradual initiatory process of budding. In one of his less known papers he says :—

"Living in the country, I was naturally first laid hold of by rural appearances or incidents. The very earliest feelings that I recall of a powerful character were connected with some clusters of crocuses in the garden. Next, I felt the passion of grief in a profound degree, for the death of a beautiful bird, a kingfisher, which had been taken up in the garden with a fractured wing. That occurred before I was two years of age. Next, I felt no grief at all, but awe the most enduring, and a dawning sense of the infinite, which brooded over me, more or less, after that time."

In his "Autobiographic Sketches" he thus draws his own inference from this and other circumstances of that period :—

"The earliest incidents in my life, which left stings in my memory so as to be remembered at this day, were two, and both before I could have completed my second year; namely, first, a remarkable dream of terrific grandeur about a favourite nurse, which is interesting to myself for this reason—that it demonstrates my dreaming tendencies to have been constitutional and not dependent upon laudanum; and, secondly, the fact of having connected a profound sense of pathos with the reappearance, very early

in the spring, of some crocuses. This I mention as inexplicable: for such annual resurrection of plants and flowers affect us only as memorials, or suggestions of some higher change, and therefore in connection with the idea of death; yet of death I could, at that time, have had no experience whatever."

About the same time the death of his sister Jane left a still more profound impression on his mind, complicated as the circumstances were by elements of a wholly new character. These resulted from the fact that a few days before the child's death there had been some whispering amongst the other servants and the children of cruelty done to her by a nurse. Though it never reached the mother's ear, it left a deep impression on the boy's mind, which may be noted as the cause of his first awakening to the sense of the strife and evil of the world, and to a consciousness of constitutional horror of violence. He says:—

"I did not often see the person charged with this cruelty; but, when I did, my eyes sought the ground; nor could I have borne to look in her face; not, however, in any spirit that could be called anger. The feeling which fell upon me was a shuddering horror, as upon a first glimpse of the truth that I was in a world of evil and strife."

The faculty of rising from facts and persons to the abstract idea, which underlies them and only reveals itself to the adult meditative mind by educated effort, is every way remarkable. And whatever deductions different minds may feel inclined to make with regard to these reports of childish experiences,

it is abundantly clear that we have to do with a premature and wholly abnormal development. As yet De Quincey himself does not claim that the idea of death, as separation and absolute removal, had revealed itself to him. "I knew little more of mortality than that Jane had disappeared. She had gone away; but perhaps she would come back. Happy interval of heaven-born ignorance! Gracious immunity of infancy from sorrow disproportioned to its strength! I was sad for Jane's absence. But still in my heart I trusted that she would come again. Summer and winter came again—crocuses and roses; why not little Jane?"

When a little over two years old he was seized with an ague which persistently clung to him till the end of his fourth year. During this period of affliction his mother assiduously attended to him and read to him, and it was towards the end of this illness that a memorable association was begun. His mother was then visited by a Miss Watson, a daughter of General Watson, that friend who afterwards became Lady Carbery, and who figures so radiantly in De Quincey's later Recollections. The girl was so attracted by the quaint and premature ways of the child, that though De Quincey speaks of her as having found in him a "doll that could talk," we may well believe that a sensitive, well-educated young girl might very easily have felt a more intelligent interest in his odd and unchildlike speeches. We find elsewhere a very characteristic memory of his emergence from this plague of ague:—

"I remember even yet, as a personal experience, that when first arrayed, at four years old, in nankeen

trousers, though still so far retaining hermaphrodite relations of dress as to wear a petticoat above my trousers, all my female friends (because they pitied me, as one that had suffered from years of ague) filled my pockets with half-crowns, of which I can render no account at this day."

But the death of a second sister, Elizabeth, while he was still in his sixth year, awakened in him fully the sense of the ineffable mystery of death. She was about nine. "Perhaps," he says, "the natural precedency in authority of years, united to the tender humility with which she declined to assert it, had been among the fascinations of her presence." Her death left his existence empty, dark, like a world without a sun; and he does not hesitate to say that his sad and strange experiences at that stage of childhood projected themselves, in their effects, far into his later years. "For thou, dear noble Elizabeth, around whose ample brow, as often as thy sweet countenance rises upon the darkness, I fancy a *tiara* of light, or a gleaming *aureola* in token of thy premature intellectual grandeur,—thou whose head, for its superb developments, was the astonishment of science,—thou next, but after an interval of happy years, thou also wert summoned away from our nursery; and the night, which for me gathered upon that event, ran after my steps far into life; and perhaps at this day I resemble little for good or for ill that which else I should have been. Pillar of fire, that didst go before me to guide and to quicken,—pillar of darkness, when thy countenance was turned away to God, that didst too truly reveal to my dawning fears the secret shadow

of death,—by what mysterious gravitation was it that my heart was drawn to thine?"

While she lay a corpse he stole secretly to her chamber, knelt by her side, and in mute farewell kissed the cold lips in a passion of grief. We notice these circumstances, because already had arisen on him that peculiar faculty of identifying the most passionate as well as the most impalpable of feelings with the impressions of the ear:—

"From the gorgeous sunlight, I turned round to the corpse. There lay the sweet childish figure; there the angel face; and, as people usually fancy, it was said in the house that the features had suffered no change. Had they not? The forehead, indeed—the serene and noble forehead—*that* might be the same; but the frozen eyelids, the darkness that seemed to steal from beneath them, the marble lips, the stiffening hands, laid palm to palm, as if repeating the supplications of the closing anguish,—could these be mistaken for life? Had it been so, wherefore did I not spring to those heavenly lips with tears and never-ending kisses? But so it was *not*. I stood checked for a moment; awe, not fear, fell upon me; and whilst I stood, a solemn wind began to blow—the saddest that ever ear heard. It was a wind that might have swept the field of mortality for a thousand centuries. Many times since, upon summer days, when the sun is about the hottest, I have remarked the same wind arising and uttering the same hollow, solemn, Memnonian but saintly swell: it is in this world the one great audible symbol of eternity. . . . Instantly, when my ear caught this vast Æolian intonation, when my eye filled

with the golden fulness of life, the pomps of the heaven above, or the glory of the flowers below, and turning when it settled upon the frost which overspread my sister's face, instantly a trance fell upon me. A vault seemed to open in the zenith of the far blue sky, a shaft which ran up for ever. I, in spirit, rose as if on billows that also ran up the shaft for ever; and the billows seemed to pursue the throne of God; but *that* also ran before us and fled away continually. The flight and the pursuit seemed to go on for ever and ever. Frost gathering frost, some Sarsar wind of death, seemed to repel me; some mighty relation between God and death dimly struggled to evolve itself from the dreadful antagonism between them; shadowy meanings even yet continue to exercise and torment, in dreams, the deciphering oracle within me. I slept—for how long I cannot say; slowly I recovered my self-possession; and, when I awoke, found myself standing, as before, close to my sister's bed.

"I have reason to believe that a *very* long interval had elapsed during this wandering or suspension of my perfect mind. When I returned to myself, there was a foot (or I fancied so) on the stairs. I was alarmed; for if anybody had detected me, means would have been taken to prevent my coming again. Hastily, therefore, I kissed the lips that I should kiss no more, and slunk, like a guilty thing, with stealthy steps from the room. Thus perished the vision, loveliest amongst all the shows which earth has revealed to me; thus mutilated was the parting which should have lasted for ever; tainted thus with fear was that farewell sacred to love and

grief, to perfect love and to grief that could not be healed."

The majesty of the English funeral service and all the attendant circumstances mingled themselves with his impressions at the bedside of the dead. And whilst he was yet "obstinately tormenting the blue depths with his scrutiny, searching them for one angelic face that might perhaps have permission to reveal itself for a moment," he was anew called to confront the image of death. His father, who had for years been absent in France, in Lisbon, in Cintra, in Madeira, in the West Indies, in the hope of relief from consumption, at length came home to die. Very graphic is his record of the anxious waiting at Greenheys for the sound of the carriage bringing the invalid. His whole attitude—his clear perception of the practical bearings of the case, his meditative melancholy—belongs rather to the man who has suffered, yet has lost nothing of his original sensibility and tenderness, than to a child of seven. He writes:—

"The first notice of the approach was the sudden emerging of horses' heads from the deep gloom of the shady lane; the next was the mass of white pillows against which the dying patient was reclining. The hearse-like pace at which the carriage moved recalled the overwhelming spectacle of that funeral which had so lately formed a part in the most memorable event of my life. But these elements of awe, that might at any rate have struck forcibly upon the mind of a child, were for me, in my condition of morbid nervousness, raised into abiding grandeur by the antecedent experiences of that particular summer night.

The listening for hours to the sounds from horses' hoofs upon distant roads, rising and falling, caught and lost, upon the gentle undulation of such fitful airs as might be stirring—the peculiar solemnity of the hours succeeding to the sunset—the glory of the dying day—the gorgeousness which, by description, so well I knew, of sunset in these West Indian Islands from which my father was returning—the knowledge that he returned only to die—the almighty pomp in which this great idea of death appareled itself to my young sorrowing heart—the corresponding pomp in which the antagonistic idea, not less mysterious, of life, rose, as if on wings, amidst tropic glories and floral pageantries that seemed even *more* solemn and pathetic than the vapoury plumes and trophies of mortality,—all this chorus of restless images, or of suggestive thoughts, gave to my father's return, which else had been fitted only to interpose one transitory red-letter day in the calendar of a child, the shadowy power of an ineffaceable agency among my dreams. This, indeed, was the one sole memorial which restores my father's image to me as a personal reality; otherwise he would have been for me a bare *nominis umbra*. He languished, indeed, for weeks upon a sofa; and during that interval, it happened naturally, from my repose of manners, that I was a privileged visitor to him throughout his waking hours. I was also present at his bedside in the closing hour of his life, which exhaled quietly, amidst snatches of delirious conversation with some imaginary visitors."

It is worthy of notice too, that, in his "Confessions," the solemn pomp of the funeral service, now

again heard, fixed itself indelibly in his mind, concurring, as he says, with all his previous feelings. So we see laid in the dim and tender years of childhood the foundations of a nature open to all the rare influences of life, sensitive to sounds, as finding there symbols of mystery and awe, and apt to connect every sensitive impression, however vague and impalpable, with some outward and sensible presence.

Not unnaturally he now more than ever strove to find some small means of escape from his own misery in books; but, unfortunately, his father's library afforded little that helped him. While dwelling on this circumstance in one of his less known writings, he gives us a little glimpse into the mode of thought and feeling that had obtained at Greenheys:—

"Cowper was the poet whom they generally most valued; Dr. Johnson, who had just ceased to be a living author, was looked up to with great reverence and interest upon various mixed feelings; partly for his courage, for his sturdy and uncomplying morality, according to his views, and his general love of truth. Too little attention was paid to music, and a disproportionate reverence to erudition. Not having the advantage of a college education themselves, my father and his class looked up with too much admiration to those who had; ascribing to them, with a natural modesty, a superiority greatly beyond the fact; and not allowing themselves to see that business and the practice of life had given to themselves countervailing advantages, nor discerning that too often

the scholar had become dull and comatose over his books; whilst the activity of trade, and the strife of practical business, had sharpened their own judgments, set an edge upon their understandings, and increased the mobility of their general powers."

Notwithstanding the aspect of stateliness in the life at Greenheys, the children were treated with a Spartan-like simplicity in diet and other things; faring, indeed, as De Quincey says, less sumptuously than the servants—a matter for which he significantly expresses gratitude. He deliberately records it as cause for thankfulness, also, that he passed his childhood in a rural solitude, and that his "infant feelings were moulded by the gentlest of sisters, and not by horrid pugilistic brothers." This he might not have been able to record so unqualifiedly, if his elder brother, who was strong and active, had not been much with his father abroad, and more recently at a public school. He very soon after this brought a new element of strife and fear into De Quincey's life. Meantime deep peace fell for a space on the family at Greenheys, while the shadows of grief and loss rested upon it. The first raising of the curtain which was to introduce him to the great world was not far distant, for the question of a school was discussed, and with such discussions may it not be said that the outward signs of childhood have passed?

The outward circumstances of the family were hardly equal to the position in which they had lived. In spite of the father's success, his lengthened illness, and his early death in his thirty-ninth year, are

reasons sufficient why, notwithstanding the aspect of luxury and elegance that obtained at Greenheys, the whole estate left amounted only to £1600 a year —the allowance to each of the boys being £150, and to each of the girls £100.

CHAPTER III.

SCHOOLS, AND TOUR IN IRELAND.

SOUGH was his awakening from the luxury of dreams in which he had found his solace. No sooner were the boys relieved from the restraints imposed by a period of mourning, than the elder brother, an adventurous and haughty boy, with no love of books or of gentle pleasures, began to lord it over his fragile companion. This boy, after returning from a period of residence at Lisbon with his father, had been for some time at the Grammar School at Louth in Lincolnshire; and, having passed through the ordeal to which boys were then exposed at public schools, he was not disinclined to practise what he had learned, in all probability, not without a measure of pain. His contempt for his shy and delicate companion was soon awakened on perceiving how he shrank from the calls made upon him to aid in rough escapades. His scorn was freely expressed, even whilst the younger was struggling, against all his deeper feelings, to obey his behests. "The Pillars of Hercules," says De Quincey, humorously, "upon which rested the vast edifice of his scorn, were these two—1st, my physics; he denounced me

for effeminacy: 2d, he assumed, and even postulated as *a datum*, which I myself could never have the face to refuse, my general idiocy. Physically, therefore, and intellectually, he looked upon me as below notice; but, *morally*, he assured me that he would give me a written character of the very best description, whenever I chose to apply for it."

All De Quincey's sufferings were intensified when, shortly after his father's death, the boys were sent daily to study classics under the Rev. Samuel Hall, one of their guardians, in Salford, within a mile of Greenheys. The coming and going became continuous scenes of feud. The elder brother picked a quarrel with the factory boys, and a campaign was persistently carried on. De Quincey was compelled to help his brother under terror of being punished and gibed at; and he lived in a fever of fear. The account of this period is brightened by the play of that quaint humour which De Quincey could so well throw over such reminiscences.

Among his papers we have found not a few references to this period, and to circumstances connected with it. He is fond of figuring their contests with the factory boys under the phantasy of regular warfare, and writes in one place:

"Because of this good disposition on my part, my promotion went forward rapidly; and I am sure it will give the reader satisfaction to hear that precisely on my eighth birthday I was raised to the rank of major-general. And by merit, observe—pure merit. What else could it be? For interest or irregular influence, by means of back-stairs or front-stairs, I never had. The particular merit which I

had consisted in absolute docility. What I was told to do I did, never presuming to murmur or to argue, or so much as to think about the nature of my orders. Doubtless, and willingly I allow it, if those orders were to run away, I obeyed them more cheerfully."

And he thus carries out the phantasy by picturing a visit from his tutor:—

"My reverend guardian had always been free of the house at Greenheys—free to come, and free to go, without question asked or limits prescribed to his visits. Nobody was more respected in the house; and sometimes, but not very often, he used this licence. Had he happened to walk over upon a night when I was desired to consider myself under arrest, and had been told of my exceeding depression, he would have come up to my bedside; in which case the following dialogue must to a certainty have taken place between us; so certainly, that I request the reader to consider me as reporting rather what was than what merely might have been:—

"'*Guardian.*—What is this I hear, child? What are you fretting about?'

"'*I.*—Because I'm under arrest.'

"'*Guard.*—Arrest! Nonsense! Who could put *you* under arrest? A child like *you?* Who was it?'

"'*I.*—The commander-in-chief.'

"'*Guard.*—Oh, dear! this is very sad. My poor child, I'm afraid you're very ill indeed. The commander-in-chief, do you say? And pray, now, if it's no secret, what for?'

"'*I.*—Oh, because he says that I didn't charge the left wing of the enemy with sufficient pluck.'

"'*Guard.* (*after musing for some time.*)—Well, now, my poor dear child, is *that* true? Does His Royal Highness the commander-in-chief say truly when he charges you with this breach of duty?'

"'*I.* (*Rising up energetically in bed.*)—No, sir; he does not. I did my best.'

"'*Guard.*—Well, that's right; nobody can do more.'

"'*I.*—But he's never content; he——'

"'*Guard.*—Who? the commander-in-chief?'

"'*I.*—Yes, sir, the commander-in-chief. I am but a major-general myself. However——'

"'*Guard.*—Oh! you are a major-general, are you?'

"'*I.*—Yes, sir, nothing more; and the case is, that the commander-in-chief——'

"'*Guard.*—Charged you with *not* charging the enemy. He charges *you,* but you didn't charge the enemy.'

"'*I.*—Oh, no, if you please; he knew very well that I charged them; but he said that I did not charge *home.*'

"'*Guard.*—Well, now, my opinion is, that you behaved well enough if you charged at all. And supposing that I should write to the Horse Guards upon this painful subject, I shall say as much; in which case I think that the arrest will be taken off. In the meantime, as it seems to disturb your rest, perhaps you had better take a little medicine. But first I will go and consult your mother.'"

On one or two occasions the poor boy actually fell into the hands of the enemy; and on these occasions his treatment was a surprise.

"In my former captures," he says, writing of a memorable third one, "there had been nothing special or worthy of commemoration in the circumstances. Neither was there in this third, excepting that, by accident, in the second stage of the case, I was delivered over to the custody of young women and girls; whereas the ordinary course would have thrown me upon the vigilant attention (relieved from monotony by the experimental kicks) of boys. So far the change was very much for the better. I had a feeling myself, on first being presented to my new young mistresses, of a distressing sort. Having always, up to the completion of my sixth year, been a privileged pet, and almost, I might say, ranking among the sanctities of the household, with all its female sections, whether young or old (an advantage which I owed originally to a long illness, an ague, stretching over two entire years of my infancy), naturally I had learned to appreciate the indulgent tenderness of women; and my heart thrilled with love and gratitude, as often as they took me up into their arms and kissed me. Here it would have been as everywhere else; but, unfortunately, my introduction to these young women was in the very worst of characters. I had been taken in arms—in arms against their own brothers, cousins, sweethearts, and on pretexts too frivolous to mention.". . .

Terrors and manifold dim anticipations of punishment were passing through his brain, he says, "when suddenly one young woman snatched me up in her arms, and kissed me; from *her*, I was passed round to others of the party, who all in turn caressed me, with no allusion to that warlike mission, against

them and theirs, which only had procured me the honour of an introduction to themselves in the character of captive. The too palpable fact that I was not the person meant by nature to exterminate their families, or to make wildernesses, and call them pacifications, had withdrawn from their minds the counter-fact—that, whatever had been my performances, my intentions had been hostile, and that in such a character only I could have become their prisoner. Not only did these young people kiss me, but I (seeing no military reason against it) kissed *them*. Really, if young women will insist on kissing major-generals, they must expect that the generals will retaliate. One only in the crowd adverted to the character in which I came before them: to be a lawful prisoner, it struck her too logical mind, that I must have been caught in some aggressive practices. 'Think,' she said, 'of this little dog fighting, and fighting our Jack.' 'But,' said another, in a propitiatory tone, 'perhaps he'll not do so any more.' I was touched by the kindness of her suggestion, and the sweet, merciful sound of that same '*Not do so any more.*'" It may be, indeed, that the arrest of which we have found such careful record may have been the punishment for this unsoldierly yielding to the caresses of the enemy.

De Quincey, as the reader is hardly prepared to find, attributes to his introduction to this rough experience some markedly compensatory influences. "Well was it for me at this period, if well for me to live at all, that from any continued contemplation of my misery, I was forced to wean myself, and suddenly to assume the harness of life. Else, under

the morbid languishing of grief, and of what the Romans call *desiderium* (the yearning too obstinate after one irrecoverable face), too probably I should have pined away into an early grave. Harsh was my awaking; but the rough febrifuge which this awaking administered, broke the strength of my sickly reveries through a period of more than two years; by which time, under the natural expansion of my bodily strength, the danger had passed over."

This brother, William,—to whom De Quincey so ungrudgingly attributes a good influence on his own fate,—was in every way a boy of remarkable character and energy. Though he disliked study, he could make use of books. He was incessantly writing and inventing, and invariably assumed towards the others the attitude of a teacher or master. He read lectures on physics in the nursery, and tried to construct an apparatus for walking across the ceiling like a fly, first on the principle of skates, and afterwards on that of a humming-top. He made balloons; he acted tragedies full of imaginary horrors; and drew pictures that frightened his sisters and the servants. He was fond of ghostly stories, and of speculating on possibilities in connection with them,—as, for instance, whether it were not possible that a confederation of all the ghosts might not defeat the whole living generation of men—indicating a spiritual or speculative vein wholly exceptional as associated with such practical force. The two brothers installed themselves as governors of imaginary kingdoms—that of the younger being always, on some pretext, invaded by the neighbouring potentate; and there is an odd but characteristic incident, due to Lord Mon-

boddo's theory, which, doubtless, would have made his Lordship laugh, but which was very gravely real and earnest to one of the persons concerned. In truth, the whole character of the young family is marked by precocity the most complete, suggesting how far the hereditary taint is to be credited with so exceptional a development. De Quincey afterwards had no doubt of hereditary taint in his own case, speaking plainly of his symptoms in youth—hectic complexion, nocturnal perspiration, difficult breathing, and other signs of phthisis. These, as we shall see, he considered were afterwards arrested by his recourse to opium.

William, amongst his other gifts, showed a genius for drawing; and when Greenhay was broken up, he was parted from his brother, and apprenticed, with premium, to Mr. de Louthenberg, then a well-known Academician. He died in London, of typhus, in his sixteenth year.

Thomas's progress at Salford had been remarkable, especially in Latin, in which his tutor, as he himself tells us, was an expert scholar. It was probably on account of his proficiency in this branch that, in his eleventh year, it was arranged he should enter the Bath Grammar School, then under Mr. Morgan, an accomplished Etonian. To it he accordingly went, along with a brother younger than himself by four years, of whom he has given us some charming glimpses. This was a child of beauty almost feminine, and of very winning disposition—so much so, that the attentions paid to him were apt to become troublesome. "For two years," says De Quincey, "this continued —a subject of irritation the keenest on one side, and of laughter on the other, between my brother and his

uglier schoolfellows, myself being among the number." All readers of De Quincey's "Autobiographic Sketches" will remember the many references to "Pink," the pain of the parting of the brothers as they afterwards proceeded to different schools; and the shadow of disaster that sat upon "Pink's" young life.

We are fortunately able to give a specimen or two of De Quincey's schoolboy letters. The following was written to his sister Mary, who was then at school in Bristol, and shows that thus early his fancifulness and fun had begun to assert themselves. He playfully signs himself, as will be noticed, "Tabitha," on which some jokes are founded, and drops the aristocratic "de"—a circumstance on which a remark will fall to be made by and by.

BATH, GREEN PARK BUILDINGS EAST, No. 6.
Tuesday Morning, March 12th, 1799.

MY DEAR SISTER,—Once more after a long campaign—after "Bella, horrida bella"—I return to the arts of peace. Don't you think this a fine metaphor? Well, I suppose you would like to hear how this war first broke out? This day six weeks as we were up saying, Mr. M. was called out, and so forsooth *little*, or rather *big Mounseer* Collins must jump into the desk. It happened that little Harman minor wanted his hat, which hung up over Collins's head. Wilbraham asked for the cane to reach it him, which Coll. refused, and at the same time to give a little strength (I suppose) to his refusal, and to enforce his authority as a *master*, endeavoured to hit him on the shoulder (as *he* says); but how shall I relate the sequel? On poor Ego did it fall. Say, Muse, what could inspire the cane with such a direful purpose? But not on my shoulder, on my *pate* it fell —unhappy pate! worthy of a better fate! Do you see that *pate* and *fate* rime, ay? However, I went on with my lesson when Mr. M. returned. As soon as I came home my mother

sent for Mr. Grant; about three o'clock he came. I was then shaved on the place, and bled with six leeches; and two of the old jockies were so fond of my head that they staid on for three hours, and would not have departed even then, had not Mr. Grant (who came again at nine o'clock) flogged them off with some salt. Next morning I was bled again by the same number. For three weeks I neither read, nor wrote, nor talked, nor eat meat, nor went out of the back drawing-room, except when I went to bed. In the fourth week I read for a *quarter of an hour per day!* and eat a little bit of meat; but I did not write. I now do everything as I used to do, except dancing, running, drinking wine. I am not to go to school till Easter.

My mother wishes to know whether onny of the *little Innocents* are coming to Bath; because she would wish you to come with them. I should suppose old Madam Richardson or Ingleby, or some of those old jockies, will come, and then you might take a Saturday-afternoon coach and come to tea; so write as early as you can. I believe you will be in time for Mademoiselle's ball, which was put off (as I suppose) on my account.

I was introduced last Thursday night to young Lord Westport (Lord Altamont's only child), and on Sunday I dined with him at his house at Lansdown. He is a very nice boy, about my size. My mother will call upon Mr. and Mrs. Grace (*N.B.* Mr. Grace is his tutor), and invite them and Lord W. to our house, where I shall have the opportunity of introducing him to you. Dr. Mapleton and Mr. Grant have left off coming to visit me. My mother desires her love to you. Mrs. Pratt continues to grow better; she has no complaint, but is still unable to walk even upstairs without help. She goes out every day in a chair. *N.B.* They have a gang of robbers in Manchester. Mr Kelsall's warehouse was attempted, but John C. called the watchmen, who drove them off. Some of the new books are come—viz., "Asiatic Researches" (Sir William Jones' work), Goldsmith's Histories of Greece and England, Milner's "Ecclesiastical History," "Rambler," Hoole's "Orlando Furioso," Hoole's "Tasso," Venn's "Duty of Man," Ogden's "Sermons," &c.—Believe me, your affectionate sister,

TABITHA QUINCEY.

His passion for books—of which he had begun to make a collection—had even at this early stage brought a shadowy sorrow into De Quincey's boy-life. He exceeded his liberal allowance of pocket-money, and ran in debt to the extent of some three guineas; and as he was ashamed to tell any of his friends or to ask their help, his trouble of conscience and his grief became excessive. Not improbably this circumstance, in conjunction with his natural dislike of being made an object of show, sufficed to render him little pleased with the plaudits which were showered upon him at the Bath Grammar School. He soon reached the *acme* of distinction. The master paraded his Latin verses before the older boys. They, however, were moved rather to hatred than to emulation. In one or two instances he was reproached and insulted by them. They tried by every means to fasten quarrels on him. He, all this time, was pining for a sympathy that seemed inaccessible, and he thus indicates his feelings at that period:—

"Yet, for a word spoken in kindness, how readily I would have resigned (had it been altogether at my own choice to do so) the peacock's feather in my cap as the merest of baubles. Undoubtedly, praise sounded sweet in my ears also; but that was nothing by comparison with what stood on the other side. I detested distinctions that were connected with mortifications to others; and, even if I could have got over *that*, the eternal feud fretted and tormented my nature. The contest was terminated for me by my removal from the school, in consequence of a very alarming illness threatening my head; but it lasted more than a year, and it did not close before several

among my public enemies had become my private friends."

At Bath, too, it was that De Quincey developed his passion for Greek, soon acquiring great mastery in it. His former tutor had given all the preference to Latin, and when he first went to Bath, the older boys, who were directed to his Latin verses as to models, had the advantage over him in the freedom with which they could handle the choral parts of Greek plays; but, taken with the love of Greek, his remarkable memory and his tact for languages stood him in good stead. "At thirteen, I wrote Greek with ease," he says, "and at fifteen my command of that language was so great, that I not only composed Greek verses in lyric metres, but could converse in Greek fluently, and without embarrassment—an accomplishment which I have not since met with in any scholar of my times, and which, in my case, was owing to the practice of daily reading off the newspapers into the best Greek I could furnish *extempore;* for the necessity of ransacking my memory and invention, for all sorts and combinations of periphrastic expressions, as equivalents for modern ideas, images, relations of things, &c., gave me a compass of diction which would never have been called out by a dull translation of moral essays, &c. 'That boy,' said one of the masters, pointing the attention of a stranger to me, 'that boy could harangue an Athenian mob, better than you or I could address an English one.' He who honoured me with this eulogy was a scholar, 'and a ripe and good one:' and of all my tutors, was the only one whom I loved or reverenced."

During the illness which had necessitated his removal from Bath, his mother read to him, as she had done during his infantine sufferings from ague. It is very characteristic of his mother, as illustrating her austerity of character, that she was "shocked at my hearing compliments to my own merits, and was altogether disturbed at what doubtless the teachers had expected to see received with maternal pride. She declined to let me return to the Bath School on my recovery, and [shortly afterwards] I went to another at Winkfield, in the county of Wilts, of which the chief recommendation lay in 'the religious character of the master.'" In this trait of De Quincey's mother, readers of recent biography will detect something not a little kindred to what frequently comes out in Lord Macaulay's treatment by his father in the earlier days. This type of severity would almost seem to be inseparable from certain forms of Evangelicalism—as if rigid and gloomy dogmas leave no openings for sympathetic expression in certain directions, but as certainly, account for it how we may, it has been a leading influence in framing noble characters.

It must have been some relief for the boy to indulge freely his fun and frolic in writing to his sister at Bristol. In one letter we find him thus excusing himself for delay in writing:—

My Dear Sister,—The tip of my nose is covered with confusion, my young toe blusheth and my old one is ashamed, when I consider my profound impudence in disobeying your commands. But, my dear, I have had very little time to write to you, considering that I have almost twenty-five boys' business to do every day.

Next Tuesday being the 18th, I hope to see the tip of the Turkey carpet in our dining-room. On Monday night is the

breaking-up supper. All Monday is a holiday (for which I care just as much as I do for the fourth tuck in Miss Ingleby's frock). We shall be in Bath by eleven o'clock. I believe Miss Spencer is coming with us to Bath ; and Miss Christiana, Miss Betsey, and Amey are at Oxford. What beautiful paper ! what charming writing !

My mother (I meant to write it with a great M) has been here about a fortnight. Remember, when you write to me, child (which you mustn't do before the holidays), never to write the day of the month in figures, but at full length in what-d'ye-call-ums, for it's very disrespectful to use contractions to your superiors.—My dear, believe me, your ever dutiful son and affectionate sister,

TABITHA QUINCEY.

WINKFIELD, *June* 11*th*.

De Quincey omits to mention in the above passage that for a short time after leaving the Bath Grammar School, and before proceeding to Winkfield, his mother kept him under her own eye, having engaged tutors for him and his brothers. One of these was a Frenchman, who had fled from his own country in the Reign of Terror, thankful to keep his head where it was originally placed. Of this Frenchman many stories were current among the members of the family at the time. One of these Miss de Quincey recalls, as having been told to her by her aunt, and it will no doubt have the effect of disturbing that conception of De Quincey's boyish character which is exhausted by the phrases "dreamy," "brooding," "visionary." It shows him full of prank and boyish frolic :—

"My grandmother," says Miss de Quincey, "was an attractive-looking and agreeable woman ; and this Frenchman—a man of considerable rank and fortune —had a great business in looking after these unruly

children, who were all the worse for finding out that he had wanted to marry their mother. Instead of doing their lessons, the two younger brothers and my father took seats at the window, and employed their time in making faces at an old lady who lived opposite. The poor French gentleman, utterly unable to teach or to keep order, was constantly to be heard crying, 'Now, Monsieur Tomma, oh, do be parsuaded! Oh, do be parsuaded!' The poor man wept over his troubles, but Monsieur Tomma would not be 'parsuaded.' At length the old lady complained. My grandmother then represented the matter in its true light, and suddenly Monsieur Tomma was 'parsuaded' to go over and apologise to the old lady, who was somewhat surprised to receive a call from the little wretch who had so annoyed her, but who made such a handsome apology that she asked him to sit down, and he at once entered into conversation with her. She afterwards spoke of him to many people, saying that he was the cleverest and nicest little boy she ever saw. The tutor went back to France, but not as Monsieur Tomma's stepfather."

It was probably such inveterate unmanageableness, under home supervision and French tutors, that caused Winkfield—whose "chief recommendation lay in 'the religious character of the master'"—to be thought of.

Another reason may, however, have weighed with De Quincey's mother. In spite of a return of good spirits, the boy continued at intervals to suffer much from pains in the head, attributed to the blow which

he had received. A school in the country may thus have had the additional recommendation of being likely to promote his health, which threatened to be permanently impaired. But he was eminently companionable—anything but a moping or solitary boy. Certain letters which passed between one of his school-fellows—the Rev. E. W. Grinfield, well known as a theologian and Biblical critic—and De Quincey's eldest daughter, Margaret—Mrs Craig—in 1859-60, just after his death, furnish some reminiscences of him then.

"He came to Spencer's," wrote Mr. Grinfield, "because he had received a blow on the head from the usher of the Bath Grammar School, from the effects of which it was fancied that he still suffered; and he was attended by a physician, Dr Mapleton from Bath. But I think the injury was purely imaginary, and that his pains arose from irritation in his too active and susceptible brain. I remember his great affection for his brother Richard, whom we called 'Pink,' because he was so handsome. I can remember their mother coming to Winkfield—a very clever lady, and intimate with Hannah More; but I recollect that your father said his mother was as clever as Hannah. We carried on a little weekly paper called 'The Observer,' for our own improvement in composition, and for the benefit and amusement of the Miss Spencers; and I remember well the interest De Quincey took in it, and the clever, funny things he wrote. I can even now recall some lines he composed in answer to a challenge from a neighbouring school:—

'Since Ames's skinny school has dared
To challenge Spencer's boys,
We thus to them bold answer give
To prove ourselves "no toys."

'Full thirty hardy boys we are,
As brave as e'er was known;
We will nor threats nor dangers mind
To make you change your tone!'

"He was a great favourite with all the boys at Spencer's, and my younger brother, Tom, at Clifton, remembers how he assisted him in his lessons. He did not much like old Spencer, who was a very inferior scholar to his first tutor at Manchester and his teachers at Bath; but he was a special favourite with the Miss Spencers."

The younger brother Tom, referred to above, became rector of Clifton; and in a letter addressed by him to De Quincey in 1847, to which we shall find pathetic reference in one of De Quincey's letters to be given afterwards, we read:—

"It is probable that the fine memory, which is sure to form an ingredient in such a mind as yours, may still enable you to recall from a long, long oblivion a certain quiet, tame, insignificant schoolfellow, by name *Tom* Grinfield (*not Edward*, his elder brother), whom you used occasionally to help in his Virgil lessons, as you sat with your back toward the schoolroom-door at the central table, near old *Spencer's* chair of hearing, at *Winkfield* school. It is now *near half a century* since the period to which I would fain recall your thoughts for some idle moments of listless reverie, and lowly respite from the excursions of genius. The memory of

early days has an *unutterable* power over me, as over yourself, and the *greater* as I decline; and so, having some years ago paid a half-day's visit to the well-remembered scene just before the death of Spencer's son Tom, his successor in the rectory, I penned a few plain verses, which I will here transcribe, as just equivalent with so much truthful prose:—

"What deep, sad yearnings in my bosom swelled
As—*thrice ten* years elapsed—I once beheld,
Winkfield, thy homely scene, so early known,
The schoolroom, playground, silent now and lone!
Myself how changed! a pensive pilgrim grey,
Where oft the schoolboy rushed from task to play!
'Twas there, De Quincey (not obscure the name,
Linked with bright Coleridge, and with opium's fame),
You kindly solved each question I might ask
In Virgil's, Ovid's loved though painful task.
So fine your genius, and so bland your mood,
Amidst a horde of savages so rude,
A being of superior mould you seemed,
And, like an angel, mixed with mortals, beamed.
Tutored by *your* Homeric mind's command,
We marched a *Grecian* and a *Trojan* band;
Achilles, Ajax, Diomede, arrayed
With spear and shield by Farmer *Hillman* made.
Ulysses marked *yourself,* the master-mind;
While in your beauteous brother *Paris* shined.
Old Spencer's self approved the classic wile,
And wreathed his solemn visage to a smile.
When Ames's school had challenged Spencer's boys,
Still rings in memory's ear the applauding noise
That hailed *your* bold response,* rehearsed aloud
From the school-table to the stripling crowd,

"* Your response began—'Since Ames's skinny school has dared to challenge Spencer's boys,' &c. Your own favourite stanza began—'Haply you chance to meet our little band so brave.'"

Hurling 'retorted scorn' in martial numbers proud.
The prize proposed to schools, and well bestowed
On *your* neat version of *Horatian* ode,*
For little WINKFIELD won unlooked-for fame,
And blazoned at fourteen DE QUINCEY'S name.
Oh, magic spell upon our latest age
Cast by the scene where childhood conned his page!
How have I felt thee in my waning day,
After long, changeful years had passed away,
Retracing early haunts at WINKFIELD and PAUL'S CRAY!
As though the spirit of my youth once more
Had met me where it left so long before."

T. G. *February 26th*, 1846.

Our readers will perhaps pardon the enthusiastic effusiveness of these lines, as they will suffice to show the lasting impression De Quincey made on his school companions—an impression of a gentle and studious, but still a truly boyish and energetic character—not standing coldly apart, but entering readily into sports and pastimes, and eager to aid and to do a kindness.

At Winkfield, De Quincey remained only a little over a year. He left it to go to Eton to join his friend Lord Westport, son of the Irish Earl of Altamont, and grandson, on the mother's side, to the celebrated Lord Howe, for a tour in Ireland. He has himself told fully all the incidents of that journey—how he had audience of George III. at Frogmore; how he first saw the city—"No, not the city, but the nation"—of London; and then, how for a period of months he enjoyed the amenities of high life among the Irish nobility; and how in Ireland he first fell under the spell of the tender passion. The

"* 'Integer vitæ,' &c. You began—'Fuscus, the man whose heart is pure,' &c."

object of it was Miss Blake, an Irish lady of education and rank, sister to the Dowager-Countess of Errol, whom he met on a canal-boat, and who by the most delicate use of her powers of conversation saved him from the vulgar references of some tuft-hunters on board, who were inclined to show deference to Lord Westport by an insinuated disrespect for his companion—whom they had discovered by accident to be a person of no expectations, just as they had discovered that he was a nobleman and wealthy. Miss Blake threw her *ægis* over him; and afterwards, when matters of literary interest were discussed, we can well believe that she felt De Quincey amply repaid her for the effort she had put forth to shield him from taunts.

In a series of letters, which exhibit quick observation and capacity to profit by new surroundings, we have a detailed account of his experiences during this Irish tour. We shall give a few specimens of them, though they are but schoolboy letters. In a note, dated July 2d, 1800, Mr. Grace, Lord Westport's tutor, writes to him in these terms:—

"Your acceptance of Westport's invitation gives me the greatest pleasure, and I have little doubt but you will be gratified by the excursion in whatever objects you have in view. To a mind anxious for information, and capable of receiving it, there are few things which may not become a source; and I should hope on this occasion there will be found many occurrences for an inquiring and strong mind to improve upon. I am very happy that you have such a desire to visit Ireland; you will travel through a great part of it, quite across the kingdom,

but not the best part of it. I hope your conclusions in favour of England, when compared with it, may not be too much to its disadvantage. Every country has its peculiar modes and habits, and those things which may at first view appear quite absurd and ridiculous, will often, upon more accurate examination, be found the wise results of experience; but I am sure your good sense will teach you to *distinguish*."

They accordingly set out on the 18th July; and he thus gives his impression of some of the interesting points in the journey to Holyhead in a note to his mother:—

The journey (as far as relates to the places we passed through) was extremely pleasant. At Stratford-on-Avon I visited the house in which Shakespeare was born. I had not time to go and see his grave, which was three-quarters of a mile off. The road through Wales was much finer than anything I have ever seen, or ever expected to see. From Oswestry to Llangollen was the first remarkably beautiful stage. If you went that road any time when you were in Wales, you will probably remember that we travel on the side of a mountain looking down into an immensely deep valley surrounded by

> "Mountains and rocks which rise
> In rugged grandeur to the skies."

The sun was then setting, and the effect of his glowing light on the woods, the winding river, and the cattle below, and on the distant mountains, and gigantic rocks above, was far more beautiful in the former, and sublime in the latter, than I am able to describe. The road from Llangollen to Corwen, I am told, is still more delightful; but, as we travelled that stage between nine and twelve o'clock, I saw very little of it. At first, indeed, the dusky hills, seen "through the horizontal misty air," were mournful, but in a short time the increasing twilight prevented me from having any but a very indistinct view of the fine scenes we were passing through. Of all the stages, however, that we travelled, none, in my opinion, was equal to the

one between Aberconway and Bangor. It is seventeen miles in length (reckoning to the ferry), and nearly the whole way by vast rocks. Part of the road lies over Pen-Man-Mawr, and for more than ten miles I suppose we ride in sight of the sea. But I am afraid I am "teaching my grandmother (my mother at least) to suck eggs," in talking of places which I dare say you have been over many times, and therefore know much better than I. On Friday evening, Lord Westport came to me and desired me to go with him to the play. I tried to escape by saying that I had letters to write (which in fact I had); however, as he seemed much disappointed at not going on the last evening of his being near a playhouse, and as he declared he would not go without me, I consented at length to accompany him to the Windsor Theatre. But be assured, my dear mother, I would not have done this for all the world if I could have helped it, had I no other reason for avoiding public amusements than the earnest desire of obliging and obeying you.—Believe me, dear mother, your ever affectionate son,

T. DE QUINCEY.

July 22nd, Tuesday Morning, 1800.

He sketches in a very lively way a drive from Dunleary to Dublin in a jingle, which he defines as a "rotten sociable drawn by one skeleton;" vividly describes the last sittings of the Irish House of Lords, at which he was present with his friends; and is able to assure his sister, that "notwithstanding the dangerous places through which we are constantly riding, I have never yet been thrown." The following is an account of an installation of the Knights of the Blue Ribbon—made all the more interesting to De Quincey and his friends in that Lord Altamont was one of those installed:—

The installation was very grand. It was performed in St. Patrick's Cathedral. As the church is very small, there was not room for more than 250 spectators. The day was suffocatingly hot, and each of the six knights was arrayed (besides

their usual clothes) in thirty-seven yards of blue satin lined with as many of white. Every knight had three esquires, who were dressed like himself, except that their robes were white lined with blue. There was another difference between the dresses of the knights and squires, that the hats of the first had six fine feathers in them, white, red, and blue, while those of the latter had none. The music I thought was very fine, and far the best part of the exhibition. The organ is larger, I believe, than that at the Abbey, but has exactly the same tone; so much so, that when, at the entrance of the procession, the organist began the coronation anthem, I was actually startled, and was certain I had heard it before, though I could not exactly tell where. It gave me the same sensation as when one sees a person whom one formerly knew, but who is now so altered by time as to leave one in doubtful consideration who he is or when or where one saw him. "God save the King" was performed by the band within, accompanied by the soldiers without, in the finest and most hair-making-to-stand-erect manner I ever heard. The whole business was concluded by Gettingen's *Te Deum*, which took about an hour in performing. The company were a little disturbed in the middle of the installation by the falling of the banners belonging to one of the knights; which, however, though they were erected at the altar, where the people were almost standing on one another's heads, yet, to the great surprise of every one present, did not the least injury to any man, any woman, or any child. . . . The crowd to see the procession was immense; and, indeed, it was very well worth seeing. It was so large, I know, that when it made its entrance into the church, as a lady who stood near me said, it *visibly* increased the heat. In the evening about ten o'clock, when I was just going to sleep, I was startled by very loud huzzaings before the door. They kept me awake for a couple of hours. This morning Lord Altamont tells me it was the mob, who had collected in Sackville Street, and made bonfires to congratulate him on having been made a Knight of the Most Noble Order of St. Patrick.

Lord Altamont is a very fat man, and so lame that he is obliged to have two servants to support him whenever he stirs. He had formerly, Lord Westport tells me, a paralytic stroke. He is a very sensible man, I think, and one of the most loyal

persons I know. He abhors the very idea of gaming, and does not like to see a pack of cards. He will on no account permit Westport to play for money, and would be very angry if he saw him playing at all, though it were for nothing. He never swears, because he thinks it both a blackguard and a foolish practice. He always goes to church once on a Sunday, makes all the responses, seems very attentive, and loves to talk with me about the sermon as we are coming home from church. He does not conceive there is any harm in a clergyman's going to the play, and was quite astonished to hear from Westport that Mr. Grace had never seen "Blue Beard."

Lord Altamont's favourite study is "agriculture." He is member of a farming society here, and is continually introducing the English methods and customs in Mayo, nearly the whole of which he possesses. He has at different times brought over large flocks of the finest English breeds, and has persuaded some Devonshire gentlemen to come and live at Westport, in order to teach the people there the English manner of farming. He is very good-natured and polite, but despises fashion, seldom goes out to dinner anywhere, but has constantly half a dozen or a dozen of his particular friends and relations to dine and drink tea with him. He is very temperate, and is excessively cheerful, and sometimes quite gay in the evening. I am now reading "Park's Travels" and "Mallet du Pan." The former I am just finishing, but of "Mallet du Pan" I have only read the three first numbers, containing the "History of the Destruction of the Helvetic League and Liberty." However, what I *have* read, I have read with great attention, and am abridging it, as I do most books with which I am much pleased. Rasselas has been my bosom friend ever since I left Bath. Lord A. lent me another book, which, I dare say, you have read: "History of the Campaigns of 1796 in Germany and Italy." I read it with the maps, and by that means got a pretty accurate knowledge of the geography of those countries. As Largeaux is constantly talking French to us, I am considerably improved, I think, in that language, and am able to speak it with great ease. I have two Greek books here, so that I am advancing in it, and by teaching Lord Westport every day to make verses, I keep up my Latin.

On Friday and Saturday, August 1st and 2d, I went to the

House of Lords. On Friday I heard the Union Act passed, and on Saturday the election of the twenty-eight peers who are to be returned to the English Parliament. Lord Altamont is one of them.

A further letter gives some interesting glimpses, and shows, we think, a remarkable variety of interests for a boy of fifteen.

WESTPORT, *Wednesday, August 20th*, 1800.

DEAR AND HONOURED MOTHER,—About five o'clock on Wednesday morning (August 13th), we set off in the canal-boat which goes from Dublin to Tullamore. This is a very pleasant mode of conveyance, and something like that on the canal from Manchester to Runcorn. But it is rather slow, as you may judge from our not reaching Tullamore (which is only forty-five and a half miles *Irish*), until eight o'clock in the evening. After waiting nearly an hour in the boat, and not being able to procure any chaise to carry us on to the next stage, Lord Altamont determined to go to Lord Tullamore's seat, called Charleville, three miles from Tullamore. At length the Dean found a man who agreed to take us that night to Charleville. The chaise was almost breaking down, full of holes, and so small that I was obliged to sit on Lord Altamont's knee. The poor, lean, miserable, famished scarecrows who dragged us along were just come off a long stage, so that the driver was obliged to walk by their sides to hinder them from falling. This is a sample of the travelling accommodations on the road from Dublin to Westport. I saw nothing strikingly beautiful at Lord Tullamore's, either in the house or grounds. On Thursday we left Charleville at six in the morning, and reached Clohans between nine and ten. Here we found Lord A.'s phaeton, which had been sent on from Dublin the Tuesday before, waiting for us with four horses. After we had breakfasted, it was agreed that Lord A., the Dean, and Westport should go in the phaeton, I and Largeaux follow in a post-chaise, and that after we had gone the first six miles, I and Westport should change places. We had hardly gone three, when the iron coating of one of the phaeton's wheels came off. After we had found a blacksmith's shop, Lord Altamont and Westport got into the chaise, the

Dean rode on horseback, and Largeaux staid behind with the other servants to come on with the phaeton. In an hour and a half we reached Ballinasloe. Here there were no horses to be got. After resting an hour, the same horses who had brought us to Ballinasloe (twelve miles *Irish*) took us on to Milough, which is about sixteen Irish miles; so that the same pair of horses drew us about thirty-six English miles, which proves that though the *Irish* horses are not so well kept, they are capable of bearing as much labour as the *English*. Here we dined immediately (for we did not get in till past six), walked about a little, and then went to bed. The phaeton arrived about two hours after us. At Milough the Dean has a living, so that we left him there, and proceeded to Tuam. We reached this place at nine, and though we were now only two stages from Westport, yet Lord Altamont, fearing from the badness of the roads, want of horses, &c., that we might not get in till late in the evening, drove up to the Archbishop's palace, where we passed the whole day and night. The Archbishop's name is *Beresford*. In the evening there were at the Archbishop's a Mr. Murray and a Lord St. Lawrence. Lord Altamont, having read my translation of the Ode in Horace, desired me to show it to the company. The book, after a great deal of search, could not be found; but as I could say it by heart, I wrote it out, and Mr. Murray read it. They then desired me to translate for them another Ode at Westport, which I am going to do. The next morning Lord A. set off at six o'clock in order to avoid being pressed by the Archbishop to stay another day. We breakfasted at Ballinasloe, where we found a chariot and horses waiting for us, and reached Westport about three o'clock in the afternoon (on Saturday, August 16th).

Westport is a most delightful place. The house is very large and handsome. The finest room in it is fifty-seven feet and a half long. The only thing in which I am disappointed is the very one in which I was most certain I should be gratified—I mean the *library*. Even as to *quantity* it is inferior to ours in Bath; and as to *quality*, it is the worst I ever saw. Almost all the books are about *farriery* and *draining*, or *law reports* and old trials. However, I hear that the *French* and the *rebels*, who have twice been in possession of this house

have made off with the best books. There is a fine deer-park here, containing nearly 300 acres. Croagh Patrick, the highest mountain I believe in Ireland, is about six miles from us in a direct line; he is shaped like a sugar-loaf, and is generally *cloud-capt*. Lord Altamont thinks this mountain was formerly a volcano. To-morrow we go up to the top of it. We generally ride sixteen or seventeen miles a day, by which means we get to see almost everything worth seeing in this most romantic country. It was originally fixed that we should leave Westport on the 8th of September, exactly three weeks from Monday last; but of this I am not quite certain yet. Westport tells me that he shall ask his papa for a week more, as some *small* compensation for keeping him a day at the Archbishop of Tuam's, which, in the Eton phrase, he thought *a great bore*. It depends, however, principally I suppose, on the time when Lady Altamont can come over. Lady Howe, you have, I dare-say, heard before this, is dead; and Lady A. is staying with her sister, Lady Viscountess Howe. Lord Altamont wishes to go over with us to fetch her to Westport, and she may probably want to come over in less or more than three weeks.

As to the rebellion in Ireland, the English, I think, use the *amplifying*, and the Irish the *diminishing hyperbole;* the former view it with a *magnifying glass*, the latter with a *microscope*. In England, I remember, we heard such horrid accounts of murders, and battles, and robberies, and here everybody tells me the country *is* in as quiet a state as England, and *has* been so for some time past. What makes me suspect the truth of these smooth-tongued messengers is that the rebellion, even at its greatest height, they affect to treat with indifference, and speak of it as we should of a Birmingham riot. I know, in England, I used to hear people talking of it as of a *bloody civil war*, and the rebel troops were considered, *I* thought, *a formidable army;* whereas *here* they are termed *merely straggling banditti*, who unroofed a few cabins and took away *some* cattle. I often hear people making such remarks as these: "And indeed the rebels were come into the town, and as I thought they *might probably be troublesome* if I staid, I therefore determined to ride off after breakfast; for *really* many persons of my acquaintance, *I do assure ee*, had their trunks taken away on the road."

Last Sunday (August 18th), I got your letter dated July 26th. I am very much obliged to you for it, my dear mother, and will endeavour to answer everything which requires an answer in it. *First*, as to *bathing*, I need only say, that, begging Dr. Mapleton's pardon, much care is not necessary in attending to his rules for they contain rather a list of things which I am *not* to do, than of what I *am* to do. At any rate, they are such rules as I prescribed to myself, and have always observed since my first bathe in the *Thames*. As yet I have felt not the least inconvenience from it; on the contrary, I am always fresher and livelier after going into the water.

Secondly, about *Frogmore*. I certainly *did* go there in my travelling dress, but then my travelling dress was a very good one (much better than what Lord Westport had on), and my boots were cleaned. Mr. Grace thought I was dressed quite well enough. Besides, I hardly saw five persons in the gardens, for the ball had begun then, and the ballroom was so crowded that it was impossible for any person to see what I was dressed in.

Friday morning, August 22nd, 1800.—Yesterday we ascended the famous Croagh Patrick. It is about two miles to the top (by the winding road), from which may be seen a great part of Connaught. When I was at the summit, I thought of Shakespeare looking "abroad from some high cliff, and enjoying the elemental war." Beneath us indeed was a most tremendous war of the elements, whilst we were as calm and serene as possible. To our left we saw all Clew Bay and the vast Atlantic. Going up and coming down took us about three hours and a half. All the way up on the side were piled stones in the form of little graves by the Roman Catholic priests. At the top is a circular wall, very rough and craggy, on which, at St. Patrick's Day, all the Papists, for many miles round, run on their knees (quite bare) till the skin is off.

In the canal-boat was a Miss Blake, a sister of the present Countess Dowager of Errol. She and I formed an acquaintance, and talked about the English poets for the whole afternoon. She said that Mr. Blake (her father) had agreed, at the request of Lady Errol, who is in raptures with Bath, to take a house there. Lady Errol, she said, had hitherto lodged in Milsom Street and Great Pulteney Street, but their house was

to be in Queen's Square. She then desired me to call upon her when she came to Bath, which she supposed would be sometime in October. Lady Errol I have frequently seen wheeling about Bath. Miss Blake is very like her. I afterwards found from Lord Altamont that she is a friend of his.

I have just received your letter of the 12th of August. Much as I wish to hear from you, my dear mother, I am sorry you should spend that time in writing to me which, I am sure, your health much requires to be spent in rest. I am much concerned to hear that Mrs. Schreiber still continues so ill. Give my very best love, if you please, to her, and my dear sister, Mary. Mary, I know, is a most superlative hyperexcellent nurse, and I will write to her, if possible, by the next post. My remembrance, or compliments, or something of that sort, if you please, to Lord and Lady Carbery. I understood his Lordship was coming over immediately to Ireland.

I meant to have written on Monday, but was prevented by various circumstances. On Wednesday I began this letter (for on Tuesday there is no post) but not having it finished by half after two o'clock, I was compelled to keep it until to-morrow (Saturday), for the post only goes on *Mondays*, *Wednesdays*, and *Saturdays*. Lord Altamont has just told me that he means to be in Dublin by the 10th of September; so that most probably I shall be at home on the 15th. There is now but little time, you know, my dear mother, for seeking a school. To Eton I am sure you will not send me. As for any private school, if you knew what a dislike I have to them, how miserable I feel at the thought of going to one, you would not, I think, wish me. It is not for any particular inconveniences, which are *generally* met with at private schools, that I abhor them so much—it is for a fault, (at least in *my* eyes a *fault*) which cannot be remedied, which is essential to the very nature of the school. I mean its *being* private. Few private schools, I should think, are much superior, even in point of *learning*, to Mr. Spencer's. But the thing which makes me most unhappy at a private school is there being no emulation, no ambition, nothing to contend for—no honours to excite one. This was exactly the case at Mr. Spencer's. I was at the head of the school the whole time I was there. No one but myself could make verses, and all those kind of things; but then I had no

one to contend with, nor anything higher to aspire to. The consequence was that my powers entirely flagged, my mind became quite dormant in comparison of what it was at the Bath Grammar School. I had no one to praise me, to spur me on, or to help me. Nobody (except the boys) knew I was at the top of the school. With them it was considered no merit to be the head-boy; and *had* it, I should have derived but little pleasure from the applause of those who, with few exceptions, were nearly approaching to idiots. I was often pestered with such questions from the ladies, &c., as, "Are you in the same class with little Emly" (a little boy of about twelve years old, *decidedly* the greatest blockhead I ever saw). In short, it *was*, and always *will* be, as impossible for me to exert myself much at a private as in a public school, as it would be for a person running for his own amusement to go as quick as if he were running a race or flying from his pursuers. At a private school I have "little to fear or hope from censure or from praise." If, then, you let me go to *any* public school, what can be better than the Bath one? The plan pursued there every one allows to be incomparable. It is a very great improvement I think on the Eton method. If I had room, I would compare them together from what I have heard and observed at both places, and I am sure you would allow it. But of the *learning* it is useless to speak, since you yourself say it is just as you would wish it. If it is the *morals* you object to, are they not as good as at most places? Besides, my dear mother, you will remember that the only reason (as far as I know) for my not being now at the Grammar School was on account of the affair with Mrs. P——. It is now a year and a half since that happened. I do not pretend to defend it; but that was not occasioned, I think, by anything belonging to the Grammar School. It might have happened with equal ease at any other place; and I had not then been near the Grammar School for above two months. Surely *one* fault, and that, too, committed at a time when my brain was certainly disordered and my head injured by the blow I had received, will not for ever be urged as a reason for my not going to the only place where I can be happy, or from which I can derive any solid and lasting advantage. Believe me, my dear mother, if you knew my mind you would see how resolutely bent I am against anything which

could give you uneasiness. Any promises you wish I am ready to make. In short, everything you desire me I will do, and only ask for that one thing, to go to the Grammar School.—Believe me, my dear, very dear mother, your ever affectionate son, T. DE QUINCEY.

For MRS. DE QUINCEY,
At MRS. SCHREIBER'S,
Tixover,
Near Stamford, Lincolnshire,
Old England.

This is how, in more mature years, De Quincey estimated the effect on his mind and character of the new experience due to his meeting with Miss Blake—on which delicate point it will have been noticed that he is silent to his mother:—

"Never, until this hour, had I thought of women as objects of a possible interest, or of a reverential love. I had known them either in their infirmities and their unamiable aspects, or else in those sterner relations which made them objects of ungenial and uncompanionable feelings. Now first it struck me that life might owe half its attractions and all its graces to female companionship. Gazing, perhaps, with too earnest an admiration at this generous and spirited young daughter of Ireland, and in that way making her these acknowledgments for her goodness which I could not properly clothe in words, I was roused to a sense of my indecorum by seeing her suddenly blush. I believe that Miss Blake interpreted my admiration rightly; for she was not offended; but, on the contrary, for the rest of the day, when not attending to her sister, conversed almost exclusively, and in a confidential way, with Lord Westport and myself. The whole, in fact, of this conversation

must have convinced her that I, a mere boy as I was (viz., about fifteen), could not have presumed to direct my admiration to *her*, a fine young woman of twenty, in any other character than that of a generous champion, and a very adroit mistress in the dazzling fence of colloquial skirmish. My admiration had, in reality, been addressed to her moral qualities, her enthusiasm, her spirit, and her generosity. Yet that blush, evanescent as it was—the mere possibility that I, so very a child, should have called up the most transitory sense of bashfulness or confusion upon any female cheek, first—and suddenly as with a flash of lightning penetrating some utter darkness—illuminated to my own startled consciousness, never again to be obscured, the pure and powerful ideal of womanhood and womanly excellence. This was, in a proper sense, a *revelation;* it fixed a great era of change in my life; and this new-born idea, being agreeable to the uniform tendencies of my own nature—that is, lofty and aspiring—it governed my life with great power, and with most salutary effects. Ever after, throughout the period of youth, I was jealous of my own demeanour, reserved and awestruck in the presence of women; reverencing often, not so much *them*, as my own ideal of woman latent in them. For I carried about with me the idea, to which often I seemed to see an approximation, of

> 'A perfect woman, nobly planned,
> To warn, to comfort, and command.'

And from this day I was an altered creature, never again relapsing into the careless irreflective mind of childhood.

"At the same time, I do not wish, in paying homage to the other sex, and in glorifying its possible power over ours, to be confounded with these thoughtless and trivial rhetoricians who flatter woman with a false lip-worship; and, like Lord Byron's buccaneers, hold out to them a picture of their own empire, built only upon sensual or upon shadowy excellencies. We find continually a false enthusiasm, a mere bacchanalian inebriation, on behalf of woman, put forth by modern verse writers, expressly at the expense of the other sex, as though woman could be of porcelain, whilst man was of common earthenware."

The key to the opening of this passage will only be found by a glance at the pervading atmosphere of his home. His mother was a woman of strong intellect, but her religious prepossessions had led her almost to a gloomy narrowness and austerity. In spite of great discernment and independence of character, she allowed herself to be influenced by the straitest of the sect that regarded Hannah More with feelings akin to idolatry. She prided herself in allowing no verge to sentiment in her relation with others. The little reference to Mrs. P——, in the letter last quoted, would almost lead one to fancy that De Quincey must have been guilty of some "very injudicious" conduct. It was no more than a schoolboy trick played on this lady,—such a trick as most persons would only have smiled at. Mrs. Baird Smith says:—"My father and his elder sister thought, and, I believe, thought justly, that Mrs. P—— prejudiced his mother's mind against them. She had not a little to do with the arbitrary dropping and taking up of the 'de' in the name, as signed in the earlier

letters, as you must have noticed. She it was who urged on my grandmother that the use of the 'de' was a worldly vanity which she ought to lay aside. At this the young people were inclined to kick up their heels, but to very little purpose."

On returning from the Irish tour, De Quincey parted from Lord Westport at Birmingham, and went on to Northamptonshire to pay a visit to Lady Carbery at Laxton. She was then passing into much the same dogmatic form of religious faith as his mother; but she was friendly to him as before, and as much inclined to benefit by his companionship. He was questioned by her about innumerable difficulties in Greek, encouraged to hunt up texts and present their true exegesis, while sometimes he would endeavour to interest her and her friends in the problems he was intently engaged on and the poetry he admired. He was declared by Lady Carbery to be her "Admirable Crichton," a term of distinction, however, with which De Quincey was inclined to quarrel (somewhat to her amusement), as he held it significant of a certain superficiality to which he did not aspire. Amongst other questions, this one presented itself in the course of their studies:—"Can the present English version of the Bible be safely accepted as a literal and unerring guide?" "No," said De Quincey, "not unless it be taken with the Greek version." These severer studies, however, did not prevent Lady Carbery from doing all she could to extend the range of his accomplishments. She was even anxious to interest him in manly exercises, and provided due tutorage for him. "As Lady Carbery," he writes, "did not

forego her purpose of causing me to shine under every angle, it would have been ungrateful in me to refuse my co-operation with her plans, however little they might wear a face of promise. Accordingly, I surrendered myself for two hours daily to the lessons in horsemanship of a principal groom who ranked as a first-rate rough-rider; and I gathered manifold experiences amongst the horses—so different from the wild, hard-mouthed horses at Westport, that were often vicious and sometimes trained to vice. There, though spirited, the horses were pretty, generally gentle, and all had been regularly broke. My education was not entirely neglected even as regards sportsmanship; that great branch of philosophy being confided to one of the keepers, who was very attentive to me, in deference to the interest in myself expressed by his idolised mistress, but otherwise regarded me probably as an object of mysterious curiosity rather than of sublunary hope."

It was whilst he was still here that he heard of the intention of his guardians to insist on his going to the Manchester Grammar School instead of to Oxford, as he desired to do. He had some hope of enlisting Lady Carbery's interest in favour of his own proposal; but she, prudently, urged him to submit. He did not, however, cease to raise protests against the arrangements his guardians proposed.

CHAPTER IV.

MANCHESTER, AND WANDERINGS IN WALES.

IN 1801, De Quincey's guardians finally decided that he should go for three years to the Manchester Grammar School. This he considered an injustice to him, and a great waste of time besides. He was now sixteen years of age; and the report of his previous teachers concerning him had been, not only that he was ripe for the university, but that he was likely to shine there. His recent experiences had confirmed his precocious dislike of schoolboy society, and it was therefore with a keen sense of disappointment and chagrin that he now found himself in his native city. These feelings might have been gradually modified and done away, however, if he had fallen into proper hands. His former teachers had called forth his respect and affection; now, unfortunately, he found himself under the rule of a well-intentioned man, but a pedant, who tried to make up for his defects in scholarship—which his pupils could detect and smile at—by pomposity and an air of authority.

"When first I entered," he says, "I remember

that we read Sophocles; and it was a constant matter of triumph to us, the learned triumvirate of the first form, to see our 'Archididasculus' (as he loved to be called), conning our regular lesson before we went up, and laying a regular train, with lexicon and grammar, for blowing up and blasting (as it were), any difficulties he found in the choruses; whilst *we* never condescended to open our books until the moment of going up, and were generally employed in writing epigrams upon his wig or some such important matter."

If this was a little rude, it will be admitted that it was only boy-like; and the profound contempt a clever boy feels for an empty pedantic teacher has become proverbial. For more than a year he bore it; taking advantage as well as he could of all alleviating circumstances, and representing at first mildly, then more urgently, to his guardians, the claims he had to be at once transferred to the university. Two great alleviations there arose on the hardship of his lot. The first was that Lady Carbery came, as she had intimated to him that she intended, to pass the Christmas and winter in Manchester; and the other was a literary acquaintance which he formed, and which, though he has not celebrated it so fully in the "Autobiographic Sketches" as elsewhere, had a marked influence. It is not improbable that, as the hope of spending a portion of his time congenially in Lady Carbery's society during the winter led him to comply with the ungrateful decision of his guardian, so the acquaintance he made through her sufficed to defer, longer than

would otherwise have been the case, his flight from school and from Manchester.

Lady Carbery's visit diffused a brightness round his life in spite of the uncongenial school tasks. She, having come under the influence of religious convictions, had begun the study of Hebrew, that she might the better investigate for herself the mysteries of the Old Testament; and her knowledge in that tongue she was fain to impart to De Quincey in return for his labours in teaching her Greek. Clearly, the relief that her presence brought into the lad's life was cheering and beneficial.

Still more so, however, that acquaintance of which we spoke, and which well deserves a passing notice here, both because it will revive the memory of a beautiful and touching figure, and show how early De Quincey's habit of meditation had induced a gravity and repose of manner, which made companionship with the old congenial and fitting. This was the Reverend John Clowes, A.M., for over fifty years Rector of St. Mary's, Manchester, a man of wide learning and liberal sympathies, who had become a devotee of Swedenborg, and spent no little part of his time and his fortune in the attempt to disseminate Swedenborgian doctrines, especially amongst the clergy of the Church of England. We have put ourselves in the way of carefully examining quite a pile of Mr. Clowes's publications. They are for the most part tracts, very miscellaneous, and generally pretty well consigned to oblivion, though his little book of dialogues —the "Caterpillar and the Gooseberry Bush"— might well be reprinted by Sunday School societies at this day with every prospect of producing only

good results: for the government of the passions (a matter in which there remains much need for good teaching) is admirably enforced and in a style such as children would enjoy. He wrote "A Plain Answer to some Objections to Swedenborg's System," which had a large circulation; and in a book, which still survives (having been re-issued in a new edition in 1873), called "Outlines of Swedenborg's System," in the form of dialogues, the curious reader will find as good an idea as could be given in small space of the Baron's writings in the answers of Philadelphus to Sophron — the interlocutors. De Quincey soon became a trusted visitor at Mr. Clowes's, and enjoyed the privilege of *entrée* when few or none else would have been admitted at all; and it is hardly too much to say, that if it had not been for the attraction Mr. Clowes's house became to him, it is very doubtful if he would have stayed in Manchester so long as he did. But he himself has given in an out-of-the-way corner so clear and graceful a reminiscence of his old friend, that this chapter would be most incomplete if we did not quote it.

"It was in the year 1801, whilst yet at school," he writes, "that I made my first literary acquaintance. This was with a gentleman, now dead, and little, at any time, known in the literary world; indeed, not at all, for his authorship was confined to a department of religious literature as obscure and narrow in its influences as any that can be named—viz., Swedenborgianism. . . . . He was the most spiritual-looking, the most saintly in outward aspect, of all human beings whom I have known throughout life. He was rather tall, pale, and thin; the most un-

fleshly, the most sublimated spirit dwelling already more than half in some purer world that a poet could have imagined. Among the pictures in the house were more than one of St. John, the beloved apostle, by Italian masters; and neither the features nor the expression were wide of Mr. Clowes's own countenance. He was rector of a large parish, the more active duties of which were discharged by curates; but much of the duties within the church were still discharged by himself, and with exemplary zeal." . . . The extreme quiet and orderliness of the household seem to have impressed themselves on De Quincey's mind. "The venerable old butler," he declares, "put me in mind always, by his noiseless steps, of the Castle of Indolence, where the porter or usher walked about in shoes that were shod with felt, lest any rude echoes might be roused." The painted windows and the organ appealed to an order of sensibilities easily impressed in De Quincey's case, and the picture he draws of them is most striking; but the *real* interest of his sketch lies in the old man himself. "It shows the upright character of the man," he proceeds, "that never in one instance did he seek to bias my opinions in the direction of Swedenborgianism. Upon every other subject he treated me, notwithstanding my boyish years (15-16), as his equal. His regard for me, when thrown by accident in his way, had arisen upon his notice of my fervent simplicity, and my unusual thoughtfulness. Upon these merits, I had gained the honourable distinction of a general invitation to his house, without exception as to days or hours, when few others could boast of any admission at all. The common ground on which we

met was literature, more especially the Greek and Roman literature, and much he exerted himself in the spirit of the purest courtesy to meet my animation upon these themes. But the interest on his part was too evidently a secondary interest in *me* for whom he talked, and not in the subject. He spoke much from memory, as it were, of things that he had once felt, and little from immediate sympathy with the author; and his animation was artificial, though his courtesy, which prompted the effort, was the truest and most unaffected possible. The connection between us must have been interesting to an observer; for, though I cannot say, as Wordsworth says of old Daniel and his grandson, that there were 'ninety good years of fair and foul weather' between us, there were sixty, I imagine, at the least; whilst, as a bond of connection, there was nothing at all that I knew of beyond a common tendency to reverie, which is a bad link for *social* connection. The little ardour, meantime, with which he had for many years participated in the interests of this world, or all that it inherits, was now rapidly departing. Daily and consciously he was loosing all ties which bound him to earlier recollections; and in particular I remember—because the instance was connected with my last visit, as it proved—that for some time he was engaged daily in renouncing with solemnity (though often enough in cheerful words) book after book of classical literature, in which he had once taken particular delight. Several of these, after taking his final glance at a few passages to which a pencil-mark on the margin pointed his eye, he delivered to me as memorials in time to come of him-

self. The last of the books given to me, under these circumstances, was a Greek 'Odyssey,' in Clarke's edition. 'This,' said he, 'is nearly the sole book remaining to me of my classical library—which, for some years, I have been dispersing among my friends. Homer I retained to the last, and the "Odyssey" by preference to the "Iliad," both in compliance with my own taste, and because this very copy was my chosen companion for evening amusement during my freshman's term at Trinity College, Cambridge—whither I went in the spring of 1743. Your own favourite Grecian is Euripides; but still you must value—we must all value—Homer. I even, old as I am, could still read him with delight; and as long as any merely human composition ought to occupy my time, I should have made an exception in behalf of this solitary author. But I am a soldier of Christ: the enemy, the last enemy cannot be far off; *sarcinas colligere* is, at my age, the watchword for every faithful sentinel, hourly to keep watch and ward, to wait and to be vigilant. This very day, I have taken my farewell glance at Homer, for I must no more be found seeking my pleasure amongst the works of man; and, that I may not be tempted to break my resolution, I make over this my last book to you.' The act was in itself a solemn one: something like taking the veil for a nun—a final abjuration of the world's giddy agitations. Me it impressed powerfully in after years; because this act of self-dedication to the next world, and of parting from the intellectual luxuries of this, was also, in fact, though neither of us at the time knew it to be such, the scene of his final parting with myself."

But though De Quincey never had the good fortune to meet his friend again, the old man was not so near to the heavenly city as he had believed. His days prolonged themselves through another generation: and it hardly seems to have been his lot to have incurred the half-contemptuous feeling of pity and strangeness entertained generally towards the torpid individual who has outlived his own. For nearly a quarter of a century after this, owing to his blindness and infirmity, it was his way to address tracts to his people periodically, one volume of which at least was published, full of tender wisdom and care for them—upholding for the Gospel the character of a "dispensation of universal grace, mercy, and truth to the whole human race," and mixing with wise disquisition many shrewd and practical hints. In the dedication of this volume of tracts to the people of his parish, which was published in 1820, he speaks of having been for a long time "forbidden by bodily weakness to address you from the pulpit." He died in 1831 in his eighty-ninth year, and his memory is as likely to be preserved because of his kindness to the precocious school-boy as on account of aught that he has written.

It was during his schoolboy residence in Manchester, too, that De Quincey, while visiting some friends in Liverpool, was introduced to what was then known as the Liverpool Literary Coterie—the prominent figures of which were Dr. Currie, the biographer of Burns; Mr. Roscoe, who wrote elegant verses and translated a good deal from the Italian; and Mr. Shepherd of Gateacre, the author of some volumes on Italian literature. It was flattering to

the young lad's vanity that the intellectual benefits were not all on one side. In some things he could be the teacher. Mr. Clarke, a gentleman of large means, with whom De Quincey would appear to have resided, had travelled largely, possessed a good picture-gallery, and at this time amused himself by studying Greek, for which purpose he and De Quincey met at sunrise every summer morning, reading Æschylus together. "These meetings," says De Quincey, "at which we sometimes had the company of any stranger who chanced to be an amateur in Greek, were pleasant enough to my school-boy vanity —placing me in the position of teacher and guide to men old enough to be my grandfathers." But the dinner-parties at which the *literati* sometimes assembled in force were, according to De Quincey, not so relishable, and were "far from being equally amusing." It would appear that, whilst De Quincey appreciated to the full the culture and air of elegance that surrounded him in this "set," he could not help detecting the little foibles and inconsistencies in their opinions; and was perhaps a little too ready to expose them. Naturally enough, on account of the presence of Dr. Currie, and the fact of his "Life of Burns" having been lately published, the poet came in for discussion; and, if we may trust De Quincey's own report, he was astonished and surprised to find that, while his companions were fraternisers with French republicanism, they regarded it as a point to be censured in Burns, that he should have been so ungracious to patrons, "ungrateful," as De Quincey reports they said, "and with pride falsely directed." And he goes on to

justify himself and the part he took in the discussions thus:—

"I, in this year 1801," he says, "when in the company of Dr. Currie, did not forget, and with some pride I say that I stood alone in remembering, the very remarkable position of Burns; not merely that with his genius, and with the intellectual pretensions, generally, of his family, he should have been called to a life of early labour and of labour unhappily not prosperous, but also that he, by accident about the proudest of human spirits, should have been by accident summoned, beyond all others, to eternal recognitions of some mysterious gratitude, which he owed to some mysterious patrons little or great, whilst yet of all men, perhaps, he reaped the least obvious known benefit from any patronage that has ever been put on record. Most men, if they reap little from patronage, are liberated from the claims of patronage; or, if they are summoned to a galling dependency, have at least the fruits of their dependency. But it was this unhappy man's fate—with an early and previous irritability on this very point—to find himself saddled, by his literary correspondents, with all that was odious in dependency, whilst he had every hardship to face that is most painful in unbefriended poverty.

"On this view of the case I talked, then, being a school-boy, with and against the first editor of Burns: I did not, and I do not, profess to admire the letters (that is, the prose), all or any of Burns. I felt that they were liable to the charges of Lord Jeffrey, and to others besides; that they do not even express the natural vigour of Burns' mind, but are at once

vulgar, tawdry, coarse, and commonplace; neither was I a person to affect any profound sympathy with the general character and temperament of Burns, which has often been described as 'of the earth, earthy,'—unspiritual,—animal,—beyond those of most men equally intellectual. But still I comprehended his situation. I had for ever ringing in my ears, during that summer of 1801, those groans which ascended to heaven from his overburdened heart,—those harrowing words, '*to give him leave to toil*,' which record almost a reproach to the ordinances of God,—and I felt that upon him, amongst all the children of labour, the primeval curse had fallen heaviest and sunk deepest. Feelings such as these I had the courage to express: a personal compliment or so I might now and then hear; but all were against me on the *matter*. Dr. Currie said—'Poor Burns! such notions had been his ruin;' Mr. Shepherd continued to draw from the subject some scoff or growl at Mr. Pitt and the Excise; the laughing tailor told us a good story of some proud beggar; Mr. Clarke proposed that I should write a Greek inscription for a Cenotaph which he was to erect in his garden to the memory of Burns: and so passed away the solitary protestation on behalf of Burns' Jacobinism, together with the wine and the roses, and the sea-breezes of that same Everton, in that same summer of 1801.

"Mr. Roscoe is dead; Dr. Currie, the physician, has been found 'unable to heal himself;' Mr. Shepherd of Gateacre is a name and a shadow; Mr. Clarke is a shadow without a name; the tailor who set the table in a roar is dust and ashes; and three men

at the most remain [*i.e.*, in the year 1837] of all who, in their convivial meetings, held it right to look down upon Burns as upon one whose spirit was rebellious overmuch against the institutions of man, and Jacobinical in a sense which 'men of property,' master manufacturers, will never brook, albeit democrats by profession."

It is very piteous to read his appeals to be delivered from the penance of Mr. Lawson's school. In a long letter to his mother, he exhaustively meets her arguments one by one, and then winds up thus:—

I ask whether a person can be happy, or even simply *easy*, who is in a situation which deprives him of *health*, of *society*, of *amusement*, of *liberty*, of *congeniality of pursuits*, and which, to complete the precious picture, admits of no *variety*. I think you will hardly say he can; and yet this description was taken from my own case.

As to *health*, I may say very fairly that I have not passed one quarter of the time I have been at this school in health. I have not, it is true, been seriously ill; but I have been—what to me is worse—weary, and torpid, and languid; and no wonder, for there are three things at Mr. Lawson's which murder health. The first is want of exercise, which the whole plan of the school seems purposely directed to deny one; in winter there is, for a considerable length of time, not *one* hour in the day for walking out. The second is the badness of the air, which every day grows worse and worse from the increasing numbers of these diabolical factories. The third is the short time one has to eat one's dinner in; I have barely time to push it down, and, as to chewing it, that is out of the question. This last circumstance is, on me at least, less gradual in its effects than the two former, though they are all three (I should think) enough to ruin any person's health. This loss of health, however, though *principally*, is not *wholly*, produced by external circumstances; for, as want of health leaves the mind but ill at ease, so the misery of the mind, by alternate reaction, affects the health of the body; they are mutually cause and effect.

On the next point, you know almost as much of my situation as I know myself. Except Mr. Kelsall's, there is no house in the town where I can go and come away at all hours ; and even there I sometimes feel an intruder. Besides, Mr. K. and I have not one idea in common ; and Mrs. K. is often out, and oftener engaged. But, if it were otherwise, that can hardly be called society, which one can find at home. Do not think that by society I mean a whole host of intimates and acquaintances. I should dislike such society almost as much as my present loneliness. Naturally, I am fond of solitude ; but every one has times when he wishes for company; at these times I know but one place where I can turn to for it ; and there it is not always to be found.

Amusements, it is evident, without a sharer in them, I can have none ; and yet, who does not occasionally require some relaxation ?

You will be surprised, after what I have said in answer to your third negative argument, that I put the want of *liberty* among the grounds of my misery ; but there is nothing inconsistent in this, for, in the first place, I was speaking of freedom with respect to things on which—if on any—school-discipline should lay restraint,—here I am speaking of that liberty which ought to be allowed at schools as much as at any other place—the liberty of taking walks ; and this liberty is by no means to be enjoyed here; for even at those hours when the school does not interfere with it, our time is so unaccountably and so unnecessarily parcelled out into shreds and scraps by meals and *callings-over*, that at every turn of the day there is something lying in wait to prevent one from taking continued exercise.

The fifth cause of my misery contains in itself a world of argument. To give you some idea of my meaning, I must beg you to consider that I am living in a town where the sole and universal object of pursuit is precisely that which I hold most in abhorrence. In this place trade is the religion, and money is the god. Every object I see reminds me of those occupations which run counter to the bent of my nature, every sentiment I hear sounds a discord to my own. I cannot stir out of doors but I am nosed by a factory, a cotton-bag, a cotton-dealer, or something else allied to that most detestable commerce. Such

an object dissipates the whole train of romantic visions I had conjured up, and frequently gives the colouring to all my associations of ideas during the remainder of the day.

These five evils are, in themselves, sufficiently great; but my sixth cause of complaint—that they admit of no variety—serves to aggravate them all. Every day, and every day, with scarcely a moment's variation, returns the same dull routine of stupid employments. If even a happy situation, when chequered by no "sweet interchange" of light and shade, becomes tiresome and disgusting,—what must that situation be which, in itself miserable, superadds this also to complete its misery, that it experiences no change, that it is *uniformity* of misery. Perpetual light is bad; but far worse is that situation where no ray ever enters,

> "But cloud instead and ever-during dark."

All these arguments are enough to prove that I have reason to be miserable; but, if I could bring no such arguments, is not my earnestness a sufficient proof that I am so? Should I have taken all this trouble, and given both you and myself so much uneasiness, to gratify a mere temporary caprice? This consideration ought to have some weight; but, even though it and all my arguments fail to convince you that I am unhappy, the fact is no less certainly so. In short, so habitually miserable do I feel, as sometimes hardly to care about myself, and often to think

> "That I would set my life on any chance,
> To mend it or be rid on't."

"But, allowing" (you will say), "that you are miserable to the full extent, and from the causes that you say you are, still, supposing my arguments for your remaining at the school unanswerable, are not they sufficient in their future consequences to overbalance a year's present misery?" I feel that they are not; but, granting that they were, then I should bring forward those six facts which I have advanced to show what reason I have for being miserable as additional arguments for my leaving the school, even supposing them not sufficient causes to produce misery. At present, however, I think I have no occasion to use them in this double capacity.

Before I conclude, I must just ask you, my dear mother, whether you know that what I am now requesting is not out of

the common course? I am sure, from the general tenor and from particular passages of your letters, that you do not know this, which makes a very material difference. In short, this circumstance alone, exclusive of all arguments, makes it *reasonable*, and my arguments, if solid, make it *necessary* for me to be removed from school.

The Mr. Kelsall referred to above was the successor of his father in the business in Manchester. Some portion of De Quincey's patrimony was still invested in that business: hence the request for remittances to be found in later letters. Of this Mr. Kelsall, after failure in business and desolating domestic bereavements, De Quincey gives a touching picture in the final edition of the "Confessions." While in shelter from a shower in the streets of Manchester, he saw a bent but yet familiar figure creeping along the streets. He says that he shrunk from presenting himself for fear of causing pain in the too vivid recollection of happier days he might thus recall to the stricken man.

All De Quincey's reasonings, representations, and appeals failed of effect. He must either at once choose a profession or stay where he was. As this meant drudgery in a lawyer's office for years instead of the delights of literary study, he declined to comply, and decided to take the matter into his own hands. It was summer; his seventeenth birthday was drawing near, after which he had resolved that he should no longer be numbered among school-boys. He wrote to Lady Carbery for a loan of £5. Instead, after some delay, through absence, she sent him £10, saying that though it should never be repaid she would not be ruined; and with this and £2 which he had of his own he resolved to run away.

He frankly confesses, however, that there was much to be said on prudential grounds for the view his mother and guardians took. His whole income was £150—a sum too small to maintain him at Oxford. The main reason for sending him to Manchester had been that, after he had remained there for three years, he should become entitled to £50 a year for a certain number of years—an addition which would have made residence at the university easy. Of the thirty-six months, he had already completed the better half, nineteen; and though, it was true, that, partly owing to a wrong-headed course of medical treatment, and partly owing to the strife and fever of contention with his guardian, he had lost his gaiety and peace of mind; on the other hand, as a boy passionately fond of books, and dedicated to intellectual pursuits, he could not fail to have enjoyed many happy hours in the midst of general dejection. Yet he exclaims, "O reader, urge not the crying arguments that spoke so tumultuously against me! Too sorrowfully I feel them. But my sufferings were almost insupportable; and, but for the blind unconscious conspiracy of two persons, these sufferings would either never have existed, or would have been easily relieved." And in a writing which has not been published, he says of that crisis, and of the temper of mind which it aroused in him, spurring him, as he has expressed it, by blind impulse, as of the locust or the lemming in their journeyings, to one grand effort for freedom: "Sudden resolution, that uttered itself as an irreversible *fiat*, was to escape. But in all common sense, the counter-impulse to *that*, and practically one might think the

restraining impulse, would be found instantaneously in the necessity of seeking some provision, such as could be counted on for daily support. A child, you will say, could not overlook this. No; but an adult, under certain circumstances, might."

In spite of what he had suffered at the hands of his teacher, it is touching to read the characteristic record of the boy's tender relentings on the last evening he was to be in the house. How he took solemn farewell of each familiar room and wept; how he sought occasion to pass close by the master, and thus to bid him a silent farewell by bowing, as he thought to himself, "He is old and infirm, and in this world I shall not see him again;" adding, "I could not reverence him intellectually; but he had been kind to me, and I grieved at the thought of the mortification I should inflict upon him."

It is worth noting, too, that, under a sense of duty towards servants, which had been impressed upon him by his mother, he intrusted to the care of one of his fellow-scholars who was in his secret, £3, as gratuities to be given to the servants, again reducing the amount in his hand to £9. Having thus, so far as he could, arranged everything, he retired to snatch a few hours' broken sleep, and feverishly to welcome that morning which was to launch him into the world—"that morning," he says, "from which and from its consequences, my whole succeeding life has in many important points taken its colouring."

In the early morning he got out of the house; and having, after considerable difficulty and risk, got his trunk conveyed to a carrier's, he set off to

walk to Chester, carrying a small parcel with some articles of dress under his arm; a small English poet in one pocket, and a small duodecimo containing some of the plays of Euripides—his favourite Greek poet—in the other. It had been his intention to proceed to Westmoreland; but two considerations caused him to shape his course differently: one was that he was ashamed to present himself to his friends there in the guise of a fugitive school-boy, the other concern lest his mother should suffer from this rash step. She had, after spending some years in Bath and later in Somersetshire, settled at the Priory, Chester; and he went there in the hope of managing to get a secret interview with his sister. After committing to her his plans, he meant to contrive, if possible, through her, some means of communication with his guardians, without the risk of being pounced upon, and sent back to school. Some unknown servants of Colonel Penson, a maternal uncle of his—then home from India on furlough—had eyed the lad hovering about the house with some suspicion. They communicated the fact to their master, by whom De Quincey was confronted instead of by his sister. He was taken in, and his whole affairs discussed. "My dear excellent mother," he says, "from the eternal quiet of her decorous household, looked upon every violent or irregular movement, and, therefore, upon mine at present, much as she would have done upon the opening of the seventh seal in the Book of Revelation." His uncle—who, though a good officer, was not a student—had a sneaking sympathy with a young lad preferring a ramble among breezy hills to moping

over dusty books. He dissuaded his sister from any interference with the lad's main plans, but suggested the propriety of a small allowance, agreeing with her that it would never do to encourage the younger brothers to mutiny by putting a premium on rebellion in the case of the elder one. And so De Quincey was allowed to go forth, to make his way to Wales, where he wandered about in a most erratic fashion.

As long as he kept up any negotiation with his guardians, in the way we have suggested, he received a regular allowance of a guinea a week. Commenting on this fact, in a rather inaccessible page, he says:—"Upon this sum, not, however (as may be supposed), without great difficulty, I continued to obtain a bed, and some apology for supper, in the shape of coffee or tea, at the inns scattered about the Welsh valleys for the sake of the tourist. The old village inns had, till lately, charged the most primitive prices—sixpence, for example, had been the usual rate for a dinner, and so on; but all this had very nearly disappeared under the great revolution of the times. War prices had arisen in the great markets; a great influx of tourists and artists had begun to set in to the Welsh valleys; elegant hotels arose on every side; and the prices were pretty much as on the Bath Road. Finding, therefore, that my three shillings a-day did but little at these showy inns, more than the better half being exhausted upon a bed and the perquisites to the 'waiter,' 'chambermaid,' and 'boots,' I came to the resolution of carrying a tent with me and sleeping out of doors. This tent, as may be imagined, was miserably small;

both to make it more portable, and also on account of the tent pole, which to avoid notice and trouble was no more than a common walking-cane. I pitched my tent always on the leeside of a hill; and, in a land so solitary, and free from 'high-viced' towns, I apprehended but little from any enemies, except the wild mountain cattle: these sometimes used to take umbrage at my intrusion, and advance upon my encampment in the darkness, with what intentions I could not discover, nor perhaps did they know; but I lay in constant anxiety lest some lumbering cow or other should break into my preserve, and poach her heavy foot into my face. This, however, was not the worst evil. I soon found the truth of Napoleon's criticism at St. Helena, on a proposal made for improving the art of war, by portable tents, treble-barrelled guns, &c.—that the practice of *bivouacking* which offended so deeply the humanity of some philanthropic people, was in fact most favourable to the health of the troops; and that, at most, a screen hung up to windwards was the utmost protection from open air (or properly from the weather, rather than the air), which is consistent with health. The loftier tents of the officers may be an exception; but mine, which resembled more the humbler and crowded tents of the privates, confirmed strikingly the medical objection of Napoleon. I soon found it necessary to resign it in that form; using it rather as a screen against the wind, or, on a calm night, as a pillow. Selecting the ground well on such occasions, I found the advantage of this *sub dio* sleeping in improved health; but summer air and dry ground

disappearing, I was at length obliged to seek other modes of lodging."

By and by he felt it advisable to drop all correspondence with his guardians. At one time he lodged for weeks at a solitary farmhouse, at another time he subsisted on blackberries, hips and haws, or on the casual hospitalities which he now and then received in return for such little services as he had an opportunity of rendering. Sometimes he wrote letters of business for cottagers, who happened to have relatives in Liverpool or London; more often he wrote love-letters to their sweethearts for young women who had lived as servants in Shrewsbury, or other towns on the English border. We can easily imagine how the simple young rustics would wonder at the manner in which their thoughts and sentiments were translated into deliciously-sounding sentences; and how surprised the old folks would be at the clearness with which their little business affairs were set forth for them in black and white. That this was so De Quincey has established by an instance which he has given us.

"Once in particular, near the village of Llan-y-styndw (or some such name), in a sequestered part of Merionethshire, I was entertained for upwards of three days by a family of young people, with an affectionate and fraternal kindness that left an impression upon my heart not yet impaired. The family consisted, at that time, of four sisters and three brothers, all grown up, and all remarkable for elegance and delicacy of manners. So much beauty and so much native good breeding and refinement I do not remember to have seen before or since in any

cottage, except once or twice in Westmoreland and Devonshire. They spoke English—an accomplishment not often met with in so many members of one family, especially in villages remote from the high road. Here I wrote, on my first introduction, a letter about prize money for one of the brothers, who had served on board an English man-of-war; and more privately, two love-letters for two of the sisters. They were both interesting-looking girls, and one of uncommon loveliness. In the midst of their confusion and blushes, whilst dictating, or rather giving me general instructions, it did not require any great penetration to discover that what they wished was, that their letters should be as kind as was consistent with proper maidenly pride. I contrived so to temper my expressions as to reconcile the gratification of both feelings; and they were as much pleased with the way in which I had expressed their thoughts, as (in their simplicity) they were astonished at my having so readily discovered them. The reception one meets with from the women of a family generally determines the tenor of one's whole entertainment. In this case I had discharged my confidential duties as secretary so much to the general satisfaction, perhaps also amusing them with my conversation, that I was pressed to stay with a cordiality I had little inclination to resist. I slept with the brothers, the only unoccupied bed standing in the apartment of the young women; but in all other points they treated me with a respect not usually paid to purses as light as mine; as if my scholarship were sufficient evidence that I was of 'gentle blood.' There I lived with them for three

days, and great part of a fourth; and from the undiminished kindness they continued to show me, I believe that I might have stayed with them up to this time, if their power had corresponded with their wishes."

We can easily understand how the experiences of these months of wandering in Wales, bringing De Quincey as they did into such direct contact with primitive human feelings in solitary villages, must have developed in other directions the precocity which had marked his intellectual powers from the first. There was much of novelty and excitement in the life which he must have thoroughly enjoyed, and he might have been tempted to prolong this rambling beyond the point where it was not injurious; but necessity, like an 'armed man,' came in with its stern decree. He found himself actually without money to go on with, beyond a very limited time, and no hope of further supplies—besides the pressure of an ever-growing fear that his guardians might be on his track. He therefore contrived to transfer himself to London, where, in his complete ignorance of the world, he was fain to think that he might get an advance of money on the security of his "expectations." To raise £200 was his purpose; and this, doled out in four yearly instalments of £50, would, in his idea, suffice till he had reached his majority.

CHAPTER V.

IN LONDON.

HE himself has told the story of the sad episode of his London life, with such picturesque force and pathos, that few readers can be unacquainted with it. It forms a part of the first section of the "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater." To the pains then endured, and to the weakness induced in the system by want, De Quincey always attributed the sufferings which prompted his escape into opium. It has such an important bearing on his after life that we must give a general outline of it.

When taken in connection with the sum of his literary effort, certain facts in his life become invested with deep significance. From the outward changes in his lot De Quincey did not fail to learn much: the feelings each of them awakened, the memories they revived, became a new and inalienable part of himself. The dreaming faculty in such men as De Quincey is, after all, a realistic and restoring faculty, paradoxical as the statement may appear. The over-pressure of the social instincts, as he has

well said, does much to weaken or to wipe out the sense of the infinite; the undefinable instincts and emotions by which we maintain a hold on the ideals and the mystic truths which enwrap all life, are day by day blunted and rendered torpid through lack of exercise by extreme pre-occupation in practical concerns, and are best awakened anew in hard and worldly hearts by the grace and beauty of childhood. And where the actual contact with childhood may not be present, to stimulate and to revive, a certain order of literature—the literature, that is, of simple fancy,—may secure by symbol what was missed in the relation of fact. "Tragedy, romance, fairy-tale, all alike restore to men's minds the ideals of justice, hope, truth, mercy, retribution, which else (left to the support of daily life in its realities) would languish for want of sufficient illustration." A recent writer in the "Cornhill Magazine," after a most careful analysis of the "Psychology of Dreams," as it would appear, half unconsciously supports this idea when, in summing up, he writes:—

"It seems almost as if during sleep *we returned to the undeveloped mental condition of infancy, with the single difference that our emotions are more various and our images are furnished by a larger field of experience.* It has been urged by more than one writer, with a good deal of plausibility, that dreams are representations of a primordial state of intelligence and mental development, as we see it now in children."

And Nathaniel Hawthorne, in one of the most subtle passages which he penned in his later days, confirms this view, when he unfolds to us the secret

of old Dr. Dolliver's aged serenity and hopeful joy:—

"Youth, however eclipsed for a season, is undoubtedly the proper, permanent, and genuine condition of man; and if we look closely into this dreary delusion of growing old, we shall find it never absolutely succeeds in laying hold of our innermost convictions. A sombre garment, woven of life's unrealities, has muffled us from our true self, but within it smiles the youth whom we knew; the ashes of many perishable things have fallen upon our youthful fire, but beneath them lurk the seeds of inextinguishable flame. So powerful is this instinctive faith, that men of simple modes of character are prone to antedate its consummation. And thus it happened with poor Grandsir Dolliver, who often awoke from an old man's fitful sleep with a sense that his senile predicament was but a dream of the past night; and hobbling hastily across the cold floor to the looking-glass, he would be grievously disappointed at beholding the white hair, the wrinkles and furrows, the ashen visage and bent form, the melancholy mask of age, in which, as he now remembered, some strange and sad enchantment had involved him for years gone by."

We thus discover in each man, much though it may have been dulled and darkened by rough contact with the world, a perpetual reminder of infancy and youth. If the "child is father to the man," the man is, by the very laws of his nature, the inseparable companion of his childhood, through which access may often be found to his "better self," when all more direct appeals to intellect or conscience may

have failed. With this thought before us, we can the more clearly see the special mission of such minds as De Quincey's. It is simply to revive those rarer instincts and emotions as real and pervading forces in human life, without the sense of which a man is lop-sided, imperfect, void of sympathy, a creature of narrow and limited view. If he personally suffered by the emergence of phantasy and the dreaming power, his clear and penetrating intellect, which rested in kindly union with them, enabled him often to draw from his adverse circumstances the most impressive pictures whereby to deepen the colours, and, as it were, to heighten the architecture of his dreams, and we are the gainers by his loss, and must follow him with some sympathy in his more matter-of-fact narratives, if we would faithfully estimate the truth that underlies them.

Some critics do not seem to have seized this point, and have even suggested that his "Confessions" would have been more interesting if he had had *more to confess, i.e.*, if, after the manner of Rousseau, he had indulged in certain vices. But it may well be asserted that such an expression betrays an utter lack of insight into the value of that section of De Quincey's writings which is being dealt with. The essential condition of success in the kind of dreaming to which De Quincey lays claim is an underlying purity and detachment from the ordinary desires and appetites, if we must admit that it needs to be stimulated by the indulgence of appetites special to itself. The peculiarity of De Quincey's dreams is, that while they betray all the longing for solitude on which the phantasy or dreaming faculty so much depends, they

indicate also an unusual width of sympathy, readiness to accept the poor and forlorn and repulsive *for their own sakes*, and to find redeeming and beautiful elements in them. This accounts for the place which Ann of Oxford Street holds in the opium-dreams; for the abiding impression made on De Quincey's mind by the two deaf idiot girls—"*Strulbrugs*"—who were held to menial offices by the wife of one of his early teachers; and for the reappearance so persistently in his opium-dreams at one stage of the poor Malay, to whom in pity for his miserable plight he had given some opium. It is the almost unique infusion of kindly dramatic human elements into these dreams—belonging as such usually do to a class which yield themselves to pure revelment among shadows of the fancy—that gives them their transcendent power to move us; and this element could hardly have consisted with the sense of abandoned self-enjoyment or prurient vice in the experience of the dreamer. We shall hereafter have more to say on this subject; but we have deemed it right to interject this much by way of preparing the reader to sympathise the more perfectly with the facts we are now to recall, and also to point out again how the inner and the outer life of De Quincey aided each other, to render possible the gift he has made to literature.

The very capacity to carry out the resolution he had formed to leave school, and to pass the time in wandering in remote solitudes, till his guardians might be brought to yield to his views, shows more self-dependence than might be expected from a youth who had heretofore offended so often by his dreamy

and unpractical ways. And the persistency with which he carried out his project, unflinchingly to the bitter end, indicates the possibility of greater moral strength than he might be credited with. At all events, now that he found himself in London, misfortune soon brought him among strange companions. He found a kind of lodging in a house in Greek Street, Soho, which might practically be called unoccupied, though it was really tenanted by a man—an attorney—who carried on a low and disreputable business in it.

His name was Brown or Brunell. He was a kind of agent for the Jews with whom De Quincey had opened negotiations for an advance of money, and this it was that brought them into contact. "From the expression of his face, but much more from the contradictory and self-counteracting play of his features, you gathered in a moment that he was a man who had much to conceal, and much perhaps that he would gladly forget. His eye expressed wariness against surprise, and passed in a moment into irrepressible glances of suspicion and alarm. No smile that ever his face naturally assumed but was pulled short up by some freezing counteraction, or was chased by some close following expression of sadness. One feature there was of relenting goodness and nobleness in Mr. Brunell's character, to which it was that subsequently I myself was most profoundly indebted for an asylum that saved my life. He had the deepest, the most liberal, and unaffected love of knowledge, but above all, of that specific knowledge which we call literature."

He seems to have been drawn to the starving scholar with a genuine kindly interest; and when, with great reluctance, a request was proffered to him for a nightly corner in the large rat-haunted house, it was readily accorded. De Quincey saw into much of the ongoings there, that might have been presumed to escape, in its deeper shades of suggestion, the nature of one so young; but he generously records: "My situation, at that time, gave me little experience, in my own person, of any qualities in Mr. Brunell's character but such as did him honour; and of his whole strange composition, I ought to forget everything, but that towards me he was obliging, and, to the extent of his power, generous." He cannot, however, forego the chance of casting a jet of gentle humour over the grim grotesquerie of the situation.

"Hunger-bitten as the house and the household genius seemed, wearing the legend of *famine* upon every mantlepiece or 'coigne of vantage,' and vehemently protesting, as it must have done, through all its echoes, against the introduction of supernumerary mouths, there was (and, I suppose, of necessity) a clerk, who bore the name of Pyment, or Pyemont. Mr. Pyment had no *alias*—or not to my knowledge—except, indeed, in the vituperative vocabulary of Mr. Brunell, in which most variegated nomenclature he bore many scores of opprobrious names, having no reference whatever to any real habits of the man, good or bad. At two rooms' distance, Mr. Brunell always assumed a minute and circumstantial knowledge of what Pyment was doing then, and what he was going to do next. All

which Pyment gave himself little trouble to answer, unless it happened (as now and then it did) that he could do so with ludicrous effect. What made the necessity for Pyment was the continual call for 'an appearance' to be put in at some of the subordinate courts in Westminster—courts of conscience, sheriff courts, &c. But it happens often that he who is most indispensable, and gets through most work at one hour, becomes a useless burden at another; as the harvester seems, in the eyes of an ignoramus, on a wet, wintry day, to be a luxurious idler. Of these ups and downs in Pyment's working life, Mr. Brunell made a most cynical use; making out that Pyment not only did nothing, but also that he created much work for the afflicted Brunell. However, it happened occasionally that the truth vindicated itself, by making a call on Pyment's physics —aggressive or defensive—that needed an instant attention. 'Pyment, I say; this way, Pyment—you're wanted, Pyment.' In fact, both were big, hulking men, and had need be so; for sometimes, whether with good reason or none, clients at the end of a losing suit, or of a suit nominally gained, but unexpectedly laden with heavy expenses, became refractory, showed fight, and gave Pyment reason for saying that at least on this day he had earned his salary by serving an ejectment on a client whom on any other plan it might have been hard to settle with."

The only other nightly inhabitant of the large house was a little girl, a poor, forlorn child, apparently ten years old, hunger-bitten and wretched. "Great joy the poor creature expressed when she found that

I was in future to be her companion through the hours of darkness. From the want of furniture in the large house, the noise of the rats made a prodigious echoing on the spacious staircase and hall, and amid many real bodily ills, the forsaken child had suffered much from the self-created one of ghosts." They slept on the floor, with bundles of law-papers for a pillow, and with no other covering than a tattered rug and an old horseman's cloak; creeping close together for warmth. De Quincey for a long time subsisted on scraps picked up here and there. "During Brunell's breakfast," he says, "I generally contrived a reason for lounging in; and, with an air of as much indifference as I could assume, took up such fragments as might chance to remain. Sometimes, indeed, there were none remaining. . . . As to the poor child, *she* was never admitted into his study (if I may give that name to his chief depository of parchments, law-writings, &c.); that room was to her the Bluebeard-room of the house, being regularly locked on his departure to dinner, about six o'clock, which usually was his final departure for the night. Whether this child were an illegitimate daughter of Mr. Brunell, or only a servant, I could not ascertain; she did not herself know; but certainly she was treated altogether as a menial servant. No sooner did Mr. Brunell make his appearance, than she went below-stairs, brushed his shoes, coat, &c.; and except when she was summoned to run upon some errand, she never emerged from the dismal Tartarus of the kitchens to the upper air, until my welcome knock at night called up the little trembling footsteps to the front door. Of her life

during the daytime, however, I knew little but what I gathered from her own account at night; for, as soon as the hours of business commenced I saw that my absence would be acceptable; and, in general, therefore, I went off and sat in the Parks or elsewhere until nightfall." He tells us that though in after years he made efforts to trace this child, he never succeeded. She was uninteresting, neither pretty, nor quick in understanding, nor pleasing in manners; "but I loved the child," he says, "because she was my partner in wretchedness."

By way of explaining how it was that, with so many friends able to aid him in London, De Quincey should have shrunk from applying to any of them, and have allowed himself to sink into such absolute starvation, he tells us he was afraid that by so doing he might run the risk of being discovered to his guardians, and compelled to return to the school—a humiliation he could not have brooked; and that, unpractical and inexperienced as he was, it never struck him that he might have managed to earn his subsistence as a classical Reader in a printing-office.

As was inevitable, being himself a *peripatetic*, he soon became acquainted with other *peripatetics*. "Many of these women had occasionally taken my part against watchmen, who wished to drive me off the steps of houses where I was sitting. . . . I feel no shame, nor have any reason to feel it, in avowing that I was then on familiar and friendly terms with many women in that unfortunate condition. The reader needs neither smile at this nor frown. For, not to remind my classical

readers of the old Latin proverb, '*Sine Cerere et Baccho*,' &c., it may well be supposed that in the existing state of my purse my relation with such women could not have been an impure one." Here, as in so many other cases, De Quincey found fine qualities in unexpected places, like fair flowers in the crevices of volcanic rocks, and the revelation almost repaid him for the misery he had borne. To one of these poor women he has given a permanent place in literature—for the episode of her kindness to him in his worst strait is one of the most touching things on record, and she reappears in the opium-dreams. So familiar is the history of Ann—the young girl of sixteen who had been so cruelly wronged—to all readers of English literature, that it is unnecessary to detail it here. But her most memorable act of kindness to him must be glanced at: how, when he had fainted from exhaustion on a doorstep where they were sitting in Soho Square, she ran and spent her last sixpence for wine and spices to revive him, at a moment when she could have had no hope of repayment; how, soon afterwards, having accidentally been met by a friend of the family, he was enabled to procure some articles of dress, and to go to Eton to try and arrange for Lord Westport becoming collateral security for a small loan that he had been promised by a Jew; how he parted with Ann, and how, through insufficient precautions, he was never afterwards able to trace her and to reward her for her ungrudging sacrifice on his behalf; all this he has told with such graphic power and pathos as can hardly fail to touch the heart.

Though he had put in operation all the machinery he could command, "to this hour," he writes in 1821, "I have never heard a syllable about her. This, amongst such troubles as most men meet with in this life, has been my heaviest affliction. If she lived, doubtless we must have been sometimes in search of each other, at the very same moment, through the mighty labyrinths of London; perhaps even within a few feet of each other—a barrier no wider, in a London street, often amounting in the end to a separation for eternity! During some years, I hoped that she *did* live; and I suppose that in the literal and unrhetorical use of the word *myriad*, I may say that, on my different visits to London, I have looked into many, many myriads of female faces, in the hope of meeting her. I should know her again amongst a thousand, if I saw her for a moment; for, though not handsome, she had a sweet expression of countenance, and a peculiar and graceful carriage of the head. I sought her, I have said, in hope. So it was for years; but now I should fear to see her; and her cough which grieved me when I parted from her, is now my consolation. I now wish to see her no longer; but think of her more gladly as one long since laid in the grave of a Magdalen; taken away, before injuries and cruelty had blotted out and transfigured her ingenuous nature, or the brutalities of ruffians had completed the ruin they had begun."

His journey to Eton was fruitless, as he found that Lord Westport had left for Oxford; and though Lord Desert, whom he had met before, treated him hospitably, and promised to do what he could to aid him, he

had to return to London, dejected, to resume his old manner of life. By accident, however, very soon after this, and in the most unexpected manner, the way opened for reconciliation with his friends; and he proceeded to Chester, to find his uncle still an inmate of the Priory, with its "deep monastic tranquillity." This uncle had been for a lifetime in India, and entertained odd views of many things. As may be presumed, there was no lack of topics for talk. Sometimes the nephew, if compelled to defend himself on a subject on which they chanced to take different sides, too clearly had the advantage in point of logic, in spite of his shortsightedness in all matters of worldly experience.

"It must not be supposed," says De Quincey, "that I regarded my own particular points of superiority; or that I used them with any vanity or view to present advantages. On the contrary, I sickened over them, and laboured to defeat them. But in vain I sowed error in my premises, or planted absurdities in my assumptions. Vainly I tried such blunders as putting four terms into a syllogism, which, as all the world knows, ought to run on three, a tripod it ought to be, by all rules known to man, and behold I forced it to become a quadruped. Upon my uncle's military haste and tumultuous energy in pressing his opinions, all such delicate refinements were thrown away. With disgust *I* saw, with disgust *he* saw, that too apparently the advantage lay with me in the result; and whilst I worked like a dragon to place myself in the wrong, some fiend apparently so counterworked me, that eternally I was reminded of the Manx halfpennies, which lately

I had continually seen current in North Wales; bearing for their heraldic distinction three human legs in armour, but so placed in relation to each other, that always one leg is vertical and mounting guard on behalf of the other two, which therefore are unable to sprawl aloft in the air,—in fact, to be as absurdly negligent as they choose, relying upon their vigilant brother above, and upon the written legend or motto, STABIT QUO CUNQUE JECERIT (Stand it will upright, though you should fling it in any conceivable direction). What gave another feature of distraction and incoherency to my position was that I still occupied the position of a reputed boy, nay, a child in the estimate of my audience, and of a child in disgrace." So, after one of these unsatisfactory discussions, under the taunt of his uncle that he was wasting his time, he agreed to proceed to Worcester College, Oxford, with the allowance of £100 per annum, which his guardians had offered, and under the unskilled assurance of his uncle that, "with economy, this sum might be made to meet the necessities of the case." As we shall see hereafter, Colonel Penson's good opinion of his nephew did not in any way suffer because of that runaway adventure.

CHAPTER VI.

OXFORD.

DE QUINCEY'S life at Oxford was little in conformity with the ordinary traditions of that ancient seat of learning. Its hoary antiquity, its venerable air, must have at first impressed him; the reminiscences of the famous sons of genius, who have fondly looked back to its lofty halls and its dim cloisters, could not but have stirred his enthusiasm; the inexhaustible treasures of the Bodleian could not but have sometimes tempted him to "scorn delights and live laborious days," as indeed we have the best of proof that he did. But he came burdened with experiences, luckily not common to undergraduates; and natural tendency combined with outward circumstances to repress the "genial currents," which it is as much the prerogative of Oxford to awaken and to direct, as it is to instil, or to confirm, love for liberal studies in themselves—for the Greek and the Latin poets, and for "divine philosophy." We have seen the place which Oxford had in his mind when he quarrelled with his guardians. His one passion was to be relieved from the irksomeness of schoolboy re-

straints, as well as saved from the drudgery of professional training; to be launched into a world of learning, free to follow his intellectual bent, and to seek knowledge for its own sake. In view of the smallness of his fortune, and the indifference to practical considerations, of which his guardians may already have had some tokens, something might well be urged in favour of their policy, looked at from the level of common sense; but more is to be said by way of regret that their treatment of De Quincey was so unsympathetic, and so little tempered by any perception of the real quality of his character, as only precipitated him the sooner into the whirlpool from which they would fain have saved him. Still, he studied hard, but not in the lines that lead to university honours. He could have stood an examination at any time in Greek; perhaps been able even to quiz and puzzle his examiners; but the ambition that is necessary to sustain set college studies had departed from him. His exceptional life during the year that had passed, and the sufferings he had undergone, induced some morbidity and disinclination to associate with others; and he was in no little danger of subsiding into a helpless, brooding apathy. He thus speaks of his early college life: "I, whose disease was to meditate too much and to observe too little, upon my first entrance on college life, was nearly falling into a deep melancholy, from brooding too much on the sufferings I had witnessed in London." Added to his distress in the perception of all this, there was the distracting sense of giving the future in pledge for the present by borrowing from Jews at heavy interest. "My necessities," he frankly

says, "had not arisen from any extravagance or youthful levities (these my habits and the nature of my pleasures raised me far above), but simply from the vindictive malice of my guardian, who, when he found himself no longer able to prevent me from going to the university, had, as a parting token of his good-nature, refused to sign an order granting me a shilling beyond the allowance made to me at school, viz., £100 per annum. Upon this sum it was, in my time, barely possible to have lived in college; and not possible to a man who, though above the paltry affectation of ostentatious disregard for money, and without any expensive tastes, confided, nevertheless, rather too much in servants, and did not delight in the petty details of minute economy. I soon, therefore, became embarrassed; and at length, after a most voluminous negotiation with the Jew (some parts of which if I had leisure to rehearse them would greatly amuse my readers), I was put in possession of the sum I asked for."

In these circumstances, it was easy to foresee the possibility of melancholy finding her seat and empire in his overfine and precocious intellect. He was saved from this fate by the power which the works of Wordsworth and Coleridge—as yet little known—exercised over him. He tells us that to the perusal of the "Lyrical Ballads," more especially to that of "The Ancient Mariner," he attributed the unfolding of his mind. The continuous study of the earlier works of those our two greatest modern poets and thinkers kept his sympathies alive—compelled him, as it were, to an interest in Nature and in Man, and opened for him a pathway to the highest appreciative

enjoyment of the masters of English literature—an enjoyment from which too often scholars are shut out by strict devotion to the classics till it is all too late, — the sensibilities for beauty other than that of dead languages having been nipped, like a plant by early frost. Expert as De Quincey already was in all the niceties of Latin and Greek, he lost less than he gained, by being at this time so fully taken possession of by the dawning splendours of a new era of English poetry—a circumstance which, in spite of himself, inspired him with something of the zeal of an apostle, and opened up for him the hope that in days not far distant, if not now, he might do something towards making others the sharers of his delights.

That this was so is proved by the fact that already, in many flying visits to London, he had sought out literary people, whom he may have presumed not unlikely to bring him into personal relationship with the writers who had so benefitted him. One of these was Charles Lamb; and of De Quincey's intercourse with him at this time and later we shall make opportunity to speak further on.

It was in 1804, his second year at college, too, that he first tasted opium. He had been suffering severely from a neuralgic affection, due it may be in some measure to exposure during his wanderings, or to want of thought in immersing his head when warm in cold water. In the streets of London, he had met a college friend who, on his explaining his condition, recommended opium—a fact suggesting that he may possibly have had one friend at Oxford with whom he could exchange a word on Coleridge. Be

that as it may, he speedily discovered a "beatific chemist," near the "stately Pantheon," who for some coppers became the "minister of celestial pleasures." "Here was a panacea," he exclaims, "a *φάρμακον νήπενθες*, for all human woes: here was the secret of happiness, about which philosophers had disputed for so many ages, at once discovered: happiness might now be bought for a penny, and carried in the waistcoat pocket: portable ecstasies might be had corked up in a pint bottle, and peace of mind could be sent down in gallons by the mail-coach. But if I talk in this way," he suddenly pulls up, "the reader will think I am laughing; and I can assure him, that nobody will laugh long who deals much in opium: its pleasures even are of a grave and solemn complexion; and in his happiest state, the opium-eater cannot present himself in the character of *L'Allegro:* even then he speaks and thinks as becomes *Il Penseroso.*"

In his "Suspiria" he informs us that Levana was often in his dreams at Oxford: he knew her by her Roman symbols; that already the sense of a *Pariah world*, shadowing a mighty abstraction, had taken possession of his mind and heart, fed by suggestions of the sufferings he had witnessed in London; that already he could say of the *Three Sorrows*, "'One of whom [Mater Lachrimarum] I know, and the others too surely I shall know.' For already, in my fervent youth, I saw (dimly relieved upon the dark background of my dreams) the imperfect lineaments of the awful sisters." And ever the agitations of childhood re-open in strength and sweep in upon his brain with the power and the grandeur of recovered

life. "Again I am in the chamber with my sister's corpse, again the pomps of life rise up in silence, the glory of summer, the Syrian sunlights, the frost of death. Dream forms itself mysteriously within dream; within those Oxford dreams remodels itself continually the trance in my sister's chamber—the blue heavens, the everlasting vault, the soaring billows, the throne steeped in the thought (but not the sight) of '*Who* might sit thereon;' the flight, the pursuit, the irrecoverable steps of my return to earth. Once more the funeral procession gathers; the priest in his white surplice stands waiting with a book by the side of an open grave; the sacristan is waiting with his shovel; the coffin has sunk; the *dust to dust* has ascended. Again I was in the church on a heavenly Sunday morning. The golden sunlight of God slept amongst the heads of His apostles, His martyrs, His saints; the fragment from the litany, the fragment from the clouds, awoke again the lawny beds that went up to scale the heavens—awoke again the shadowy arms that moved downward to meet them. Once again rose the swell of the anthem, the burst of the Hallelujah chorus, the storm, the trampling movement of the choral passion, the agitation of my own trembling sympathy, the tumult of the choir, the wrath of the organ. Once more I, that wallowed in the dust, became he that rose up to the clouds. And now all was bound into unity; the first state and the last were melted into each other as in some sunny glorifying haze. For high in heaven hovered a gleaming host of faces, veiled with wings, around the pillows of the dying children. And such beings sympathise equally with sorrow

that grovels, and with sorrow that soars. Such beings pity alike the children that are languishing in death, and the children that live only to languish in tears."

At this time, and for several years, however, he was an occasional rather than a constant devotee; and exercised self-control enough to enable him to extend his curiosities into new fields. In 1805 he had begun the study of German in earnest, and had soon made himself a proficient in it. The desire to unlock for himself the secrets of Herder and Kant, of whom he had heard, was the main inducement; but he soon found that, by a little toil, he had purchased the right of *entrée* into a wide and a fair kingdom; and Richter and the rest were his rich reward. Goethe, too,—though De Quincey could never be ranked among his English *worshippers*. He viewed the great modern pagan with surprise that did not disturb calm scrutiny, and has scattered through his writings some incisive if not always exhaustive criticisms on the sage of Weimar.

During his college residence, his visits to his friends the Merritts, the Craggs, and others, at Liverpool, furnished much pleasure, as we learn from his papers. During a visit to the former at Everton in 1805, we find him reviewing his idea of the "Constituents of Human Happiness," on which he had at an earlier period made some notes while on a visit at Coniston. These notes are so characteristic, and indicate so much serious thought, that we cannot but think our readers will be glad to possess them.

Constituents of Happiness.

Coniston, *Monday Morning, August* 18, 1805.

1. A capacity of thinking—*i.e.*, of abstraction and reverie.

2. The cultivation of an interest in all that concerns human life and human nature.

3. A fixed, and not merely temporary, residence in some spot of eminent beauty:—I say not merely temporary, because frequent change of abode is unfavourable to the growth of local attachment, which must of necessity exercise on any, but more especially on a contemplative mind, a most beneficial influence; and I say of eminent beauty, both for its own sake as being intrinsically an abundant source of pleasure and a most powerful assistant of fancy, and also as justifying and giving efficacy to the local attachment spoken of above. In this last view, its value is well evidenced by my own case, who in many instances wherein I have formed an infant attachment to a place not beautiful from associating with its scenery the pleasure derived from thinking, or reading, or other pleasures, have felt this attachment combated by my perception of its homeliness.

4. Such an interchange of solitude and interesting society as that each may give to each an intenser glow of pleasure.

5. *Books*, from which are derived a double pleasure—viz., 1. That furnished by the matter of the book; 2. That furnished by the consciousness of intellectual advancement, in which are involved the consciousness of extending the scale of means instrumental to happiness, and also of extending one's hold on the respect of men both on account of the actual increase of respectability, and also on account of the increasing power of enforcing one's claims by conversation and letters.

6. Some great intellectual project, to which all intellectual pursuits may be made tributary, thus giving to employments in themselves pleasurable in the highest degree that separate pleasure which even irksome employments borrow from the pleasurableness of the object to which they are pursued as instrumental.

7. Health and vigour.

8. The consciousness of a supreme mastery over all unworthy

passions (anger, contempt, and fear), and over all appetites; together with a highly cherished benevolence; or, to generalise this canon, a sense of moral elevation and purity.

9. A vast predominance of contempt, varied with only so much of action as the feelings may prompt by way of relief and invigoration to the faculty of contempt.

10. Both as subsidiary to the last, and also for its own value, a more than ordinary emancipation from worldly cares, anxieties, and connections, and from all that is comprehended under the term business; so that no frequent demands may be made on one's time, and thoughts, and feelings of interest, by subjects not of value enough to engage them. To this end one's fortune should be concentrated in one secure depositary, so as that the interest may be most easily collected; and all family arrangements should be definite and simple, and therefore not requiring much superintendence; and, in Ely Bates's phrase, one should "be compact in life."

11. The education of a child.

12. One which, not being within the range of any man's control, I should not mention, only that experience has read me a painful lesson on its value—a personal appearance tolerably respectable. I do not mean to say attractive (for that is not necessary, and with such a congregation of gifts from fortune and nature as must unite to secure the attainment of the eleven preceding constituents of happiness, cannot reasonably be expected), but so far not repulsive, and on a level with the persons of men in general, as that though, apart from the intellectual superiority of its owner, there should be nothing to excite interest—there should, on that superiority being made known, and a consequent interest existed, be nothing in its general effect to contradict that interest. A mediocrity of personal advantages, accompanied, however, with the pleasing expression resulting from the union of moral with intellectual worth, is (I am convinced) most favourable to such facility and familiarity of intercourse with all ranks of men as is the best avenue to an extensive acquaintance with humanity. Where such moderate advantages as these, however, are wanting, this want may be best compensated—(1.) By that temperate and unostentatious dignity of manners and general tranquillity and composure of behaviour which bespeaks a mind at peace with itself, that, being conscious of no claims to attention on

that ground (as far as any claim can be acquired thereby), made none, and also, rating at only its due price the quality of such attention, had purified itself of all anxiety for it, and had sought its pleasures and consolations elsewhere and more worthily, disdaining to hold any material part of its happiness as a trembling pensioner on the smiles of beings for the most part ranking in actual value decidedly below itself. (2.) By acquiring a high literary name, which, with the mass of men (of whom I am here speaking), has the effect of impressing them with a consciousness that you, who hold part in the gaze and notice and comments of collective man, are indifferent to the thoughts of individual man, and also the effect of setting you apart in their feelings from the ordinary classes of men, so as to be no longer a fit subject for comparison with them, by which comparison it was that you chiefly suffered. These are the best substitutes, I believe, with men of a middle order; men of the highest order are not concerned in this question; and, in the turmoil of worldly intercourse, *money* supersedes both the reality and the substitutes, apart or jointly.

EVERTON, *Saturday Morning, August* 22, 1805.

Concerning happiness, this addition to my speculation at Coniston occurred to me.

Nature provides to all men a sufficient supply of happiness, during that time when they have not sufficient intellect to apprehend and ascertain, or foresight to secure to themselves, sources of voluntary happiness—an involuntary happiness proceeding from an exuberance of animal joy and spirits: this she withdraws in regular progression with the advancement of the intellect, and through the *instrumentality* of that very intellect. On the decay of these self-supporting spirits commences the incumbency (which rests on every man) to provide for himself a source of permanent stimulus; and at this crisis it is that wisdom most fails the souls of men; for at this period most men begin to resort to liquors and the turbulent bustle of the world to give a feverish warmth to their else shivering spirits. This is obviously every way a low and ruinous stimulus; but, as some source of excitement is necessary, it remains to inquire *what?* And this I answer, that I am firmly persuaded that there

is none but a deep interest in those exhaustless and most lofty subjects of *human life* and *human nature:* to these are allied and ministerial, all branches of moral science, as well as records of human transactions, and all that part of history from the foundation of the world, and of voyages and travels, which records the varieties and traces the revolutions of human nature as exhibiting itself in the forms of manners, customs, literature, &c., and all fine fictions which exercise the same wholesome feelings that are put into a happy and quiet frame by such an acquaintance with humanity as is here spoken of. And hence arises, as I am tutored by my own experience, a gradual extension of interest to many other classes of books, which though in themselves not directly capable of gratifying this passion, yet are subsidiary to some branches of the philosophy which nurtures it. This increases: 1. By an increasing perception and a conviction *familiarised to the feelings* of the intimate relation such subordinate branches have with the main branches of this pursuit. 2. By the deepening of the primary interest in the main branches themselves, from which deepening all that aids them must of necessity borrow depth.

As an exemplification of what I have here said, I must record two facts in the history of my own mind. 1. The sudden swell and growth of my interest in the origin of association amongst men, and, in general, in a simplified view of political science, in the spring of this year whilst at Everton. 2. In my desire to read Edwards' "West Indies," "Gibbon," &c., and various other works, which formerly, for their own value intrinsically, and apart from the reference they bear to the subject, I should have read merely as a task. Yesterday also I perceived the closeness of the connection which *Political Economy* has, in all that relates to the division of labour, &c., with the philosophy of society. Even that dreary study of languages borrows from the splendour of the objects to which it is subservient so much of that splendour as to impart to them on the whole, at proper seasons, considerable pleasure.

In the education of a child, therefore, the grand object is to lead him to cultivate an interest in humanity, and to avail yourself of the time when such an interest has yet but a weak hold on him to perfect him in all those parts of knowledge (as languages) which are: 1. Assistant to his main purpose when he wakens to a full sense of it; and 2. Which,

being so, might interrupt or much impede his career after he had entered on it.

"One principal instrument in the generation of such an interest I believe to be the formation of two or three local and a few personal attachments.

From various notes of later dates we cull the following, as illustrating his habit of self-questioning in matters that may be said to lie between the world of thought and practice, constantly influencing and modifying each other :—

In proof of the non-development of the passion for fame during childhood, we may observe that children are never anxious about the opinion of persons at a distance. But concerning this I must think again.

Healthy and sound humour must in this, as one of its characteristics, differ from that which is unsound, in that it never takes for the ground of its mirth any ludicrous feature in the character, habits, &c., with which moral deformity is in any degree associated. Thus the threadbare coat of an author, the *elevation* of his dwelling, &c., are all subjects of good-natured merriment, because they raise only a merry smile with which no disgust or contempt is mixed; whereas in the humour of Swift and R. B. Sheridan there is always malice and sarcasm felt from the nature of the subjects selected ; and it is on this ground principally that I account for my rooted dislike of Sheridan.

Q. Whether it be not a sufficient test of a false or mean emotion that we are ashamed of it afterwards ?

Q. Whether any pursuit can be of the first class in dignity and value in which itself is not the end : thus, in depreciation of war,

"In war itself war is no ultimate purpose."—*Coleridge.*

De Quincey, after passing through all his preliminary stages, successfully underwent the written

examination for his degree. This is fully confirmed by the recollections of Mr. Grinfield, already quoted from; for he says: "I had many letters from him during his tour in Ireland, which unfortunately have been lost. I then never heard from him till we met at Oxford. He went to Worcester College, and I entered Lincoln, but we sometimes met; and I often heard of him, and knew he was much admired there. On coming into residence he secured the services of one Schwartzburg, a German, who taught him Hebrew, and whom he made a good deal of a companion for some time. From this Schwartzburg it may have been that he first derived his passion for the German literature and philosophy." * It was well known that Dr. Cotton, the Provost of Worcester, had formed the very highest opinion of him; and I have heard it said that Dr. Goodenough of Christ Church, who was one of the examiners, declared to a member of Worcester College, "You have sent us the cleverest man I ever met with; if his *viva voce* examination to-morrow correspond with what he has done to-day, he will carry everything before him."

* In this Mr. Grinfield is so far wrong. Schwartzburg may have confirmed him in his love for German, but De Haren, one of the friends he made in his wanderings in Wales, first introduced him to German and interested him in German authors and philosophers. "From him it was," says De Quincey, "that I obtained my first lesson in German, and my first acquaintance with German literature. Paul Richter I then first heard of, together with Hippel, a humorist admired by Kant, and Hamann, also classed as a humorist, but a nondescript writer, singularly obscure, whom I have never since seen in the hand of any Englishman, except once of Mr. William Hamilton. With all these writers M. de Haren had the means of making me fully acquainted in the small portable library which filled one of his trunks."

"But owing, as it was said, to some offence he took with the examiners, he disappeared from Oxford, and never passed the *viva voce*. I rather incline to believe that he had some distrust of his own presence of mind, feeling that his intellect was somewhat impatient of grappling with the smaller points which is demanded in a university examination. . . . I can well remember a warm discussion with him at college on the merits of Southey and Coleridge, in which I rashly charged him with some leaning towards deistical principles. He was so much affected that he burst into tears, took up his cap, and suddenly left the room. He was so much hurt by that insinuation, that we ceased to correspond in after life."

We learn from other sources of Dr. Cotton's high opinion of De Quincey, and here quote his testimony to personal character as well as to intellectual acquirements:—"During the period of his residence he was generally known as a quiet and studious man. He did not frequent wine parties, though he did not abstain from wine; and he devoted himself principally to the society of a German named Schwartzburg, who is said to have taught him Hebrew. He was remarkable even in those days for his rare conversational powers, and for his extraordinary stock of information upon every subject that was started."

These reports of his Oxford life tend to show that he was not so absolutely retired and isolated during his residence there as a too harsh construction of his own words, written afterwards, when the memory of severe mental struggles was more vivid than the recollection of outward facts, might lead one to

infer. His name remained on the college books till December 1810.

One of his contemporaries through all his years of residence was John Wilson, who achieved such a reputation as amounted almost to notoriety. He was not only famous as a student, but as a sportsman. And it well indicates the retirement, even the isolation, in which De Quincey lived among his own dreams and interests that he never even heard of this brilliant figure of Magdalen. De Quincey takes occasion to remark upon this circumstance in one of his sketches of Wilson:—

"Once launched in this orbit, Mr. Wilson continued to blaze away for the four successive years, 1804-5-6-7, I believe without any intermission. Possibly I myself was the one sole gownsman who had not then found my attention fixed by his most heterogeneous reputation. In a similar case, Cicero tells a man that ignorance so unaccountable of another man's pretensions, argued himself to be a *homo ignorabilis;* or, in the language of the Miltonic Satan, 'Not to know me, argues thyself unknown.' And *that* is true: a *homo ignorabilis* most certainly I was. And even with that admission it is still difficult to account for the extent and the duration of my ignorance. The fact is, that the case well expresses *both* our positions: that *he* should be so as to challenge knowledge from the most sequestered of anchorites expresses *his* life: that *I* should have right to absolute ignorance of him who was familiar as daylight to all the rest of Oxford—expresses *mine.* Never, indeed, before, to judge from what I have since heard upon inquiry, did a man by variety of talents, and

variety of humours, contrive to place himself as the connecting-link between orders of men so essentially repulsive of each other as Mr. Wilson in this instance."

"Omnis Aristippum decuit color, et status, et res."

That De Quincey did not fail to carry away from Oxford very clear ideas both of its merits and defects as a place of the higher education, is abundantly testified by many passages scattered through his writings. In after life, he was wont to contrast the universities of Scotland with those of England, and, much as he loved Scotland, he was quick to discern, and well able to illustrate, the great loss to the nation arising from her lack of provision for *extending*, in contradistinction from *cultivating*, the field of knowledge—scientific, theological, and other; and the contrasts—sometimes very minute—which he was able to draw between the Scottish Universities and Oxford in this respect, attests how completely he had observed and studied the system during these student years, in spite of his confessions of meditative vagary and lack of interest in what surrounded him.

CHAPTER VII.

WORDSWORTH AND COLERIDGE.

IF De Quincey failed to carry from Oxford the kind of reputation which tutors and examiners delight in, he had appropriated influences of another and a yet more prevailing kind. He tells us repeatedly, by way of justifying a tendency to deprecate the excessive deference to classical studies, that "all his sensibilities were at an early period laid hold of by the greatness of our own literature." During his residence at Oxford this distinctive part of his education was carried on—systematised. The "Lyrical Ballads," which had been published in 1798, he had read in the following year, and had thereafter been careful to seek for and to study everything that came from the same hands. These writings appealed to and awakened another sense than the ancient poets had ever touched. Phantasy, weird and wildly dreamy, or again still as a pastoral solitude; the simple sentiment of peasant life; and the revelation of the inner spirit of nature; all seemed here to join hands, like a band of graces, to produce one unique

impression,—that of a new revelation of beauty and significance in ordinary human life, and a concurrent ineffable sense of the mystery that everywhere broods over it. It came to De Quincey, as to one who had been waiting for the sign. He was actually taken possession of—filled with delight; and, with that mingled curiosity and generous fervour, which is one of the noblest traits of ingenuous youth, he was moved to seek to come into close personal communion with the authors of his pleasure. And this, be it noted, when the name of Wordsworth was still, in the most influential quarters, but a byword and a sign to awaken scorn. He had written to Wordsworth as early as 1803, and had actually gone to Westmoreland later with the purpose of calling upon him; but an overpowering feeling of reverence and besetting shyness caused him, as he himself declares, to turn back when within a short distance of Wordsworth's door. The correspondence which began in 1803 went on for many years.

In the first letter, which bears date July 29, 1803, Wordsworth wrote that he was just on the point of leaving on that famous tour in Scotland with Coleridge and his sister, to which he refers by way of excusing a hasty letter; but he also adds that he is "a lazy and impatient letter-writer," and takes occasion to reflect "how many things there are in a man's character of which his writings, however miscellaneous or voluminous, will give no idea! how many thousand things which go to making up the value of a practical moral man, concerning not one of which any conclusion can be drawn from what he says of himself in the world's ear!"

The next letter was written after the poet's memorable visit to Scotland, and is a somewhat singular one from a man who had absolved himself from writing any save "business letters"—clearly showing that he regarded his correspondent as an exceptional one. But here, too, he assumes the rôle of mentor, and in the course of many reflections and moralisings, remarks on the low morals of the universities sometime previously, going on to add his specific warnings, and such suggestions as these:—That there is no true dignity but in virtue, temperance, and chastity; and that the best safeguard of all these is the cultivation of pure pleasures—namely, those of the intellect and affections. And he adds, that he has much anxiety on this head, from a sincere concern in De Quincey's welfare, and the melancholy retrospect which forces itself upon him of the number of men of genius who have fallen beneath the evils that beset them. "I speak in simplicity and tender apprehension," he urges, "as one lover of nature and of virtue speaking to another." And then he goes on to tell how "a wretched creature of the name of Peter Basley" has pillaged and plagiarised the "Lyrical Ballads," especially "The Idiot Boy;" and, not content with this, in a note annexed to the same poem, had spoken of him *by name* as the *simplest—i.e.*, the most contemptible—of all poets. The complicated baseness of this, he says (for the plagiarisms were absolutely by wholesale), had grieved him to the heart for the sake of poor human nature; that anybody could combine (as this man in some way or other must have done) an admiration and love of those poems with

moral feelings so detestable, hurt him beyond measure.

In 1803, De Quincey made inquiries respecting Coleridge, and finding that he was then in Malta, filling that secretaryship to Sir Alexander Ball, he was fain to have set out for Malta for the mere purpose of seeing the poet. Circumstances of a private kind arose to prevent his carrying out this purpose; but his feelings may be guessed when he heard in the beginning of 1807 that Coleridge had returned home, and that an introduction to him could without difficulty be obtained.

When on a visit in 1807 to a relation at the Hot Wells, he learnt that Coleridge was staying with a friend not far from Bristol. This friend was Mr. Poole of Nether Stowey. To Mr Poole's house he went. Coleridge, however, had left it. But Mr. Poole hospitably urged him to remain in hope of Coleridge's return. De Quincey accordingly spent two days with Mr. Poole, and gives, from his own knowledge, a sketch of Mr. Poole's person and character, which is evidently very descriptive of the original. De Quincey writes:—

"He lived in a rustic, old-fashioned house, amply furnished with modern luxuries, and a good library. Mr. Poole had travelled extensively, and had so entirely devoted himself to his humble fellow-countrymen who resided in his neighbourhood, that for many miles round he was the general arbiter of their disputes, the guide and counsellor of their daily life; besides being appointed executor and guardian to his children by every third man who died in or about the town of Nether Stowey." . . .

De Quincey having been informed that Coleridge was at Bridgewater, and likely to stay there longer than Mr. Poole had fancied, he left Nether Stowey for that place, in search of the poet. This is the account he gives of his first interview with the author of "Christabel":

"I had received directions for finding out the house where Coleridge was visiting; and in riding down a main street of Bridgewater, I noticed a gateway corresponding to the description given me. Under this was standing, and gazing about him, a man whom I shall describe! In height he might seem to be above five feet eight (he was in reality about an inch and a half taller, but his figure was of an order which drowns the height); his person was broad and full, and tended even to corpulence; his complexion was fair, though not what painters technically style fair, because it was associated with black hair; his eyes were large and soft in their expression, and it was from the peculiar appearance of haze or dreaminess, which mixed with their light, that I recognised my object. This was Coleridge. I examined him steadfastly for a minute or more, and it struck me that he saw neither myself nor any other object in the street. He was in a deep reverie, for I had dismounted, made two or three trifling arrangements at an inn door, and advanced close to him, before he had apparently become conscious of my presence. The sound of my voice, announcing my own name, first awoke him; he started, and for a moment, seemed at a loss to understand my purpose or his own situation; for he repeated rapidly a number of words which had no

relation to either of us. There was no *mauvaise honte* in his manner, but simple perplexity, and an apparent difficulty in recovering his position among daylight realities. This little scene over, he received me with a kindness of manner so marked that it might be called gracious.

"Coleridge led me to a drawing-room and rang the bell for refreshments, and omitted no point of a courteous reception. He told me that there would be a very large dinner party on that day, which perhaps might be disagreeable to a perfect stranger; but, if not, he could assure me of a most hospitable welcome from the family. I was too anxious to see him, under all aspects, to think of declining this invitation. And these little points of business being settled, Coleridge, like some great river, the Orellana, or the St. Lawrence, that had been checked and fretted by rocks or thwarting islands, and suddenly recovers its volume of waters, and its mighty music, swept at once, as if returning to his natural business, into a continuous strain of eloquent dissertation, certainly the most novel, the most finely illustrated, and traversing the most spacious fields of thought, by transitions the most just and logical, that it was possible to conceive. . . .

"This hospitable family," De Quincey adds, "were distinguished for their amiable manners and enlightened understandings; they were descendants from Chubb, the philosophic writer, and bore the same name. For Coleridge, they all testified deep affection and esteem, sentiments which the whole town of Bridgewater seemed to share, for in the evening, when the heat of the day had declined, I

walked out with him; and rarely, perhaps never, have I seen a person so much interrupted in one hour's space as Coleridge on this occasion, by the courteous attentions of young and old."

His mother being then resident in Somersetshire, De Quincey was frequently in Bristol in those years. His love of roving among the hills and valleys of that region can be readily understood, and we can the more fully appreciate his many references to the Quantock and Mendip hills in the light of these earlier records. The following is a letter to his sister, who was then visiting at Miss Montier's at Clapham, interesting, we think, as containing a characteristic record of one of his wanderings there:—

CLIFTON, *September* 15, 1807.

MY DEAR SISTER,—I received your letter on Sunday; but I was not able then to get guineas changed into notes; and yesterday a very remarkable aberration in my account of time during a walk in Somersetshire threw me nearly five hours wide of the time within which I had planned to limit the extent of my walk. This blunder of memory seems to me even yet so marvellous that I think it as well worthy of record in the diary of a metaphysician as a natural philosopher would think a parhelion or a lunar rainbow in his. I had crossed the Avon, with the intention of taking a little walk of nine or ten miles; but having turned to the right on the downs leading to Clevedon, I found myself in a valley not very interesting at the part which I entered, but closed at the upper end with such a solemn amphitheatre of hills as I could not resolve to leave unvisited. Having reached this upper end, I just wished to cross the valley to the opposite hills; and, having crossed it, I felt some curiosity to know what might be on the other side of those hills. Mounting, therefore, I found a long range of ferny heaths bounded by the Bristol Channel. Now the fern, where it is high, makes an admirable couch; for, wherever you lie down, you find yourself curtained by a noiseless bower. Here then, the

revellings of my morning spirits being a little subdued by the gentle fatigue of a long walk and the warmth of the day, I lay down with the sea and South Wales in my view; and first I began to muse on the valley I had just crossed (which, by the way, I took to be one of the unexplored parts of Somersetshire —known only to me and the colonisers). I questioned myself on what I should do if any of the natives, having seen me from the wigwams I had passed in that valley, should come in my rear and invest my bower; giving me first notice of their approach by a specimen of the warwhoop, and perhaps at the same time should steal round the promontory to the right in their canoes. I arranged the speech which I should address to their chief, and whether it would be better to make him a present of my waistcoat buttons or my coat. This led me to a speculation on the essential differences of savage and civilised life and their causes; as, *e.g.*, how much of the virtue and moral elevation found amongst the Northern Indians is due to the influences of beautiful natural scenery; how far, among civilised men, the seclusion from such scenery in large towns is compensated by the visual representations of it in pictures and the intellectual suggestions of it (or pictures in vision) in poems, romances, &c.; of the want of a theory of manners; how far such a theory would be illuminated by, or would illuminate, other questions of metaphysics; of the hatred which women bear to metaphysics; of the other absurdities of women; but this topic, yielding a very rich harvest of thought, was not reaped in a short time; and I was just thinking in what degree the intensity of such absurdities was mitigated or heightened by the air of Clapham when the bell of a sheep, which had rambled near my bower, awoke me from my daydream, or rather my evening-dream; for, before I came in sight of fairyland, it was high twilight, and long before I reached Ashton Hill I had no other compass by which to steer amongst those downs and dingles than the trees on its summit, which were just dimly distinguishable as a stain upon the clear sky by which they were backed. About half after seven I reached the ferry—wondering (as I do yet) how it could be more than three o'clock, at which time I had proposed to be at home.

I sat down with a firm determination not to write more than three lines—having letters, &c., prayers and commands, blessings and curses, to send to the four winds. However, I am not

sorry that my desire to account satisfactorily for losing a day in answering your letter has drawn me on to a very decent length; therefore I may take my leave.—Believe me ever, my dear sister, your most affectionate brother,

THOS. DE QUINCEY.

P.S.—Mrs. Coleridge is with her children in Bristol, but Mr. Coleridge still remains at Stowey. Hartley Coleridge dined with me a few days ago; and I gained his special favour, I believe, by taking him—at the risk of our respective necks—through every dell and tangled path of Leighwood. However, Derwent still continues my favourite.

Very shortly after the date of this letter De Quincey returned to the Hot Wells, and met Coleridge there. In conversation, he found that Coleridge was in some difficulty owing to his having engaged to lecture at the Royal Institution in the coming winter, and was unable to accompany his wife and children to the North, where they were to visit Wordsworth and be taken in charge by Southey. De Quincey agreed to unite with Mrs. Coleridge in a postchaise, and they set forwards—Mrs. Coleridge, with her two sons, Hartley, aged nine, Derwent, about seven; her beautiful little daughter, Sara, about five; and himself. He thus records some incidents of their journey:—

"Going by the direct route through Gloucester, Bridgenorth, &c., on the third day we reached Liverpool, where I took up my quarters at a hotel, whilst Mrs. Coleridge paid a visit of a few days to a very interesting family, who had become friends of Southey during his visit to Portugal. These were the Misses Koster, daughters of an English gold-merchant of celebrity, who had recently quitted Portugal on the approach of the French army under

Junot. Mr. Koster did me the honour to call at my quarters and invite me to his house; an invitation which I very readily accepted; and had thus an opportunity of becoming acquainted with a family the most accomplished I had ever known. At dinner there appeared only the family party—several daughters, and one son, a fine young man of twenty, but who was *consciously* dying of asthma. Mr. Koster, the head of the family, was distinguished for his good sense and practical information; but in Liverpool, even more so by his eccentric and obstinate denial of certain notorious events, in particular, some two years later, he denied that such a battle as Talavera had ever been fought, and had a large wager depending upon the decision. His house was the resort of distinguished foreigners; and, on the first evening of my dining there, as well as afterwards, I there met that marvel of women—Madame Catalini. I had heard her repeatedly, but never before been near enough to see her smile and converse—even to be honoured with a smile myself. She and Lady Hamilton were the most effectively brilliant women I ever saw. However, on this occasion, the Misses Koster outshone even La Catalini; to her they talked in the most fluent Italian; to some foreign men, in Portuguese; to one in French; and to most of the party in English; and each, by turns, seemed to be their native tongue. Nor did they shrink, even in the presence of the mighty enchantress, from exhibiting their musical skill."

After a week thus spent in Liverpool, the party pursued their journey, reaching Grasmere quite

safely in about the usual time demanded for such stages in these days. The account of the reception has more than ordinary interest. De Quincey says, that when at some distance he saw the cottage, and recognised it as that of which he had previously gained a glimpse from Hammerscar, on the opposite side of the lake, he was seized with something of the old panic, which did not quite leave him till he was involved in the bustle of helping Mrs. Coleridge and the children out of the carriage, and advancing to the door to intimate their arrival. "Never before or since," he confesses, "can I reproach myself with having trembled at the approaching presence of any creature that is born of woman, excepting only, for once or twice in my life, woman herself." But he goes on: "Through the little gate, I pressed forward; ten steps beyond it lay the principal door of the house. To this, no longer clearly conscious of my own feelings, I passed on rapidly; I heard a step, a voice, and, like a flash of lightning, I saw the figure emerge of a tallish man, who held out his hand, and saluted me with most cordial expressions of welcome." And so, Wordsworth passing him to advance and receive Mrs. Coleridge, he had time to observe the quaint beauty and simplicity of the cottage, with its one little diamond-paned window, and its shrubberies and profusion of roses, before he was ushered into the family parlour — somewhat dark through the luxuriance of the vegetation round the window, but not so much as to prevent his seeing two ladies who had just apparently entered it. We must give his impressions of them in his own words:—

"The foremost, a tall young woman, with the most winning expression upon her features that I had ever beheld, made a slight curtsey, and advanced to me, presenting her hand with so frank an air that all embarrassment must have fled in a moment before the native goodness of her manner. This was Mrs. Wordsworth. She was now mother of two children, a son and a daughter; and she furnished a remarkable proof how possible it is for a woman, neither handsome nor even comely, according to the rigour of criticism—nay, generally pronounced very plain—to exercise all the practical power and fascination of beauty, through the more compensatory charms of sweetness all but angelic, of simplicity the most entire, womanly self-respect and purity of heart speaking through all her looks, acts, and movements. Immediately behind her, moved a lady much shorter, much slighter, and perhaps in all other respects as different from her in personal characteristics as could have been wished, for the most effective contrast. 'Her face was of Egyptian brown'—rarely, in a woman of English birth, had I seen a more determinate gipsy tan. The eyes were not soft, as Mrs. Wordsworth's, nor were they fierce or bold; but they were wild and startling, and hurried in their nature. Her manner was warm, even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which, being alternately pushed forward into a conspicuous expression by the irresistible instincts of her temperament, and then immediately checked, in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age and her maidenly condition (for she had rejected all offers of

marriage, out of pure sisterly regard to her brother and his children), gave to her whole demeanour and to her conversation an air of embarrassment and even of self-conflict, that was sometimes distressing to witness. This was Miss Wordsworth, the only sister of the poet—his 'Dorothy'—who naturally owed so much to the life-long intercourse with her great brother, in his most solitary and sequestered years; but, on the other hand, to whom he has acknowledged obligations of the profoundest nature; and, in particular, this weighty one, through which we also, the admirers and the worshippers through every age of this great poet, are become equally her debtors—that whereas the intellect of Wordsworth was, by its original tendencies, too stern—too austere—too much enamoured of an ascetic harsh sublimity; she it was—the lady who paced by his side continually through sylvan and mountain-tracks, in Highland glens, and in the dim recesses of German charcoal-burners—that first *couched* his eye to the sense of beauty—humanised him by the gentler charities, and engrafted, with her delicate female touch, those graces upon the ruder growths of his nature which have since clothed the forest of his genius with a foliage corresponding in loveliness and beauty to the strength of its boughs and the massiveness of its trunks."

On the third morning after their arrival in Grasmere, De Quincey found all the family prepared for an expedition across the mountains. A common farmer's cart was brought to the door. "Such a vehicle I had never seen used for such a purpose," says De Quincey; "but what was good enough for

the Wordsworths was good enough for me: and, accordingly, we were all carted to the little town, or large village of Ambleside—three and a half miles distant. Our style of travelling occasioned no astonishment," he says; "on the contrary, we met a smiling salutation wherever we appeared—Miss Wordsworth being, as I observed, the person most familiarly known of our party, and the one who took upon herself the whole expenses of the flying colloquies exchanged with stragglers on the road." From Ambleside, over the famous ascent of Kirkstone; then down by Brother's Water to the Vale of Patterdale, they proceeded, reaching the inn there by moonlight; and, taking fresh horses in the morning, they passed by the margin of Ulleswater. Leaving Mrs. Coleridge and the children to the sole occupancy of the 'carriage' at Ewsmere, Wordsworth and De Quincey walked on in a leisurely way to Penrith, through the woods of Lowther; and on that evening Wordsworth read to De Quincey the "White Doe of Rylstone," "an incident ever memorable to me," as he says. On the next day De Quincey reached Greta Hall; Wordsworth, as he had to make a slight diversion to do some business, having left him to pursue the last stage of his journey alone. "It was about seven o'clock when I reached Southey's door," says De Quincey; "for I had stopped to dine at a little public-house in Threlkeld, and had walked slowly for the last two hours in the dark. The arrival of a stranger occasioned a little sensation in the house; and by the time the front door could be opened, I saw Mrs. Coleridge and a gentleman of very striking appearance, whom I

could not doubt to be Southey, standing to greet my entrance."

De Quincey's stay in the Lakes could not at this time have been prolonged, however, for we find him in the early autumn back at Bristol, where he was paying a visit to some friends in the neighbourhood. This visit to Bristol is memorable, too, because it was then that he learned Coleridge was so embarrassed in circumstances that his studies were materially impeded, and offered to yield substantial aid by presenting Coleridge with the sum of £500—more than a tenth part of his whole patrimony. It was Mr. Joseph Cottle, the well-known publisher of Bristol, to whose reminiscences the student of literature turns for many facts about the "Lake poets," who was the recipient of De Quincey's confidences and the medium of his generous gift. As the transaction, from first to last, so decisively testifies to the thorough gratitude and devotion felt by De Quincey towards the poets, to whom he ever acknowledged the deepest obligations, we must give Mr. Cottle's own account of it,—the more that it reveals the great delicacy of De Quincey's mind, and indirectly may be taken to show that his account of his visit to Wordsworth's house, and his shy retreat from it without seeing the master, is quite worthy of credit, and not by any means so ridiculous and improbable as a certain writer would fain make it appear. Whatever differences may have afterwards arisen between two of the parties, De Quincey's behaviour at this stage is likely to be viewed by practical men and women as being at least as

romantic and improbable as the other. Cottle, writing of the autumn of 1807, says :—

"I received a note from a lady, an old friend, begging permission to introduce to me a clever young man of her acquaintance, whom she even so honoured as to call 'a little John Henderson,' concerning whom this young man wished to make inquiries. An invitation immediately followed, and the lady introduced to me young Mr. de Quincey. Several interviews followed, each exhibiting his talents in a more favourable view, till I was satisfied he would either shine in literature, or, with steady perseverance, acquire eminence in either of the professions.

"He made inquiries respecting John Henderson, of whose learning and surprising attainments he had heard much. After conversing long on this subject, Mr. de Quincey asked me if I knew anything of Mr. Coleridge's pecuniary affairs. I replied, 'I am afraid he is a legitimate son of genius.' He asked if I thought he would accept a hundred or two pounds. I answered, I could not tell, but that I expected shortly to see him, when, if he seriously desired to learn, I would ascertain what the state of his finances was, and let him know. This, he said, was his particular wish.

"When Mr. Coleridge called on me . . . I asked him concerning his circumstances. He confessed that he had some present difficulties, which oppressed his mind. He said that all the money he had received from his office in Malta, as secretary to Sir Alexander Ball, had been expended in Italy and on his way home. I then told him that a young

man of fortune, who admired his talents, had inquired of me if I thought he would accept a present of a hundred or two pounds; 'and I now ask you,' said I, 'that question, that I may return an answer.' Mr. Coleridge rose from his seat. He appeared much oppressed and agitated, and, after a short silence, he turned to me and said: 'Cottle, I will write to you. We will change the subject.' The next day I received from Mr. Coleridge the following letter:—

"'My dear Cottle,—Independent of letter-writing and a dinner engagement with C. Danvers, I was the whole of yesterday till evening in a most wretched restlessness of body and limbs, having imprudently discontinued some medicines, which are now my anchor of hope. This morning I dedicate to certain distant calls on Drs. Beddoes and Colston at Clifton,—not so much for the calls themselves, as for the necessity of taking brisk exercise.

"'But no unforeseen accident intervening, I shall spend the evening with you from seven o'clock.

"'I will now express my sentiments on the important subject communicated to you. I need not say it has been the cause of serious meditation. Undoubtedly calamities have so thickened on me for the last two years, that the pecuniary pressures of the moment are the only serious obstacles at present to my completion of those works which, if completed, would make me easy. Besides these, I have reason for belief that a Tragedy of mine will be brought on the stage this season, the result of which is, of course, only one of the possibilities of life, on which I am not fool enough to calculate.

" ' Finally, therefore, if you know that my unknown benefactor is in such circumstances that, in doing what he offers to do, he transgresses no duty of morals or of prudence, and does not do that from feelings which after-reflection might perhaps discountenance, I shall gratefully accept it as an unconditional loan which I trust I shall be able to restore at the close of two years. This, however, I shall be able to know at the expiration of one year, and shall then beg to know the name of my benefactor, which I should then only feel delight in knowing, when I could present to him some substantial proof that I have employed the tranquillity of mind which his kindness has enabled me to enjoy in sincere desires to benefit my fellow-men. May God bless you! S. T. C.'

" Soon after the receipt of this letter (on my invitation) Mr. de Quincey called on me. I said, ' I understood from Mr. Coleridge himself that he laboured under embarrassments. ' Then,' said he, ' I will give him five hundred pounds.' ' Are you serious?' I said. He replied, ' I am.' I then inquired, ' Are you of age?' He said, ' I am.' I then asked, ' Can you afford it?' He answered, ' I can,' and continued, ' I shall not feel it.' I paused. ' Well,' I said, ' I can know nothing of your circumstances but from your own statement, and, not doubting its accuracy, I am willing to become an agent in any way you prescribe.' Mr. de Quincey then said, ' I authorise you to ask Mr. Coleridge if he will accept from a gentleman who admires his genius the sum of five hundred pounds; ' but remember,' he continued, ' I absolutely prohibit you from naming to him the source whence it was de-

rived.' I remarked, 'To the latter part of your injunction, if you require it, I will accede, but although I am deeply interested in Mr. Coleridge's welfare, yet a spirit of equity compels me to recommend you in the first instance to present Mr. Coleridge with a smaller sum, which, if you see right, you can at any time augment.' Mr. de Quincey then replied, 'Three hundred pounds I *will* give him, and you will oblige me by making this offer of mine to Mr. Coleridge.' I replied, 'I will.' I then gave him Mr. Coleridge's letter, requesting him to put it in his pocket, and read it at his leisure. Soon after, I received the following communication from Mr. de Quincey:—

"'My dear Sir,—I will write for the three hundred pounds to-morrow. I am not able to say anything further at present, but will endeavour to call on you in a day or two. I am, very sincerely, and with many thanks for your trouble in this affair.—Yours,

'THOS. DE QUINCEY.'

"In a day or two Mr. de Quincey enclosed me the three hundred pounds, when I received from Mr. Coleridge the following receipt, which I still retain:—

"'November 12, 1807.—Received from Mr. Joseph Cottle the sum of three hundred pounds, presented to me, through him, by an unknown friend.

"'Bristol. S. T. COLERIDGE.'

"I have been thus particular in detailing the whole of this affair, so honourable to Mr. de Quincey; and, as I was the communicating agent, I thought it right, on this occasion, to give publicity to the transaction on the principle of doing justice to all. Notwithstanding the prohibition, some indirect notices from

myself could have left no doubt with Mr. Coleridge of the source of this handsome gift."

This, let it be particularly noted, is Cottle's account of the whole transaction; it has become a part of literary history, else it should not have been referred to here, notwithstanding that it indicates such a generosity and unworldliness as may be taken to excuse, if not to justify, much to which unsympathetic minds may easily give their own colour. Recklessly to part with money if interesting persons or objects that *are* deserving present themselves, is not a course to be recommended in an unqualified way in these days of charity organisation and general social reform; but there are so very few who are likely to follow so bad an example (in a worldly point of view), and to run the risk of exposing themselves erelong to want or privation, that we can afford rather to admire so exceptional a type of character.

It is singular to remark, also, that a little before this time (1807) Mr. Coleridge had written to his friend, Mr. Wade, a melancholy letter, detailing his embarrassed circumstances; so that Mr. de Quincey's £300 must have been received at an acceptable time.

Another proof of generous interest in all strugglers after intellectual position is almost incidentally afforded us in Mr. Cottle's record. The John Henderson referred to was a young man, the son of a bookseller, who, in face of the greatest hardships, had fought his way to distinction at Oxford, where his remarkable talents soon caused him to be sought after even by persons who were not likely to be much moved by the trials of an ordinary student.

Henderson, by a remarkable coincidence, had occupied the same rooms at Pembroke College as Dr. Samuel Johnson had done; and in much he gave token of repeating that great man's history; but he was early called away, and has left behind him but the shadowy report of great possibilities. Mr Cottle tells us in a little sketch, added as an appendix to his volume of poems, that Henderson's mind awakened at two years of age, that his memory was most remarkable, and that he was a great linguist. Having met Dr. Tucker, Dean of Gloucester, in a stage-coach, that dignitary was so struck by Henderson's conversation, that he wrote to his father suggesting that he should go to the university, and supplemented his advice by offering £200. Henderson was benevolent as well as gifted. When the epidemic fever raged at Oxford he visited the poorest and helped them; and when his means were exhausted, he sold his Polyglott Bible to obtain further means of aid. He was visited by Johnson and Burke, who left him surprised, instead of disappointed—an undoubted prodigy. It was quite the kind of history to awaken De Quincey's interest; and to make inquiries about Henderson seems to have been the chief purpose of his first visit to Cottle. The term "little John Henderson" used by Cottle's lady correspondent—not improbably Mrs. Hannah More—was certainly not inapt, but it must have referred to disparity of personal appearance rather than of intellectual power.

As establishing what has been indicated on an earlier page as to the relations between De Quincey and his uncle Colonel Penson, the following letter may be given here:—

SAHARUNPOOR, *January 12th*, 1808.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have received your kind and manly letter too many months back to think of without shame. Rest assured I shall not invade the independence you desire to maintain. Indeed, you have better security than my word, for my poverty will keep me from assaulting you unless a stronger necessity than at present exists should occur, and I sincerely hope no such necessity will ever occur to you. Dr. Johnson, I think, says, If I were any man's most bitter enemy, I should wish him to be reduced to the necessity of borrowing money. I am much obliged to you for the pamphlets, and for the kind offer of supplying me with books. My reading is much too desultory to admit of anything like definition. Indeed, having few books of my own, I am glad to read any that I can pick up worth the trouble of reading. If you should be able to pick up on any of the stalls of Oxford or London De Foe's account of the Plague in 1665 or 1666, I shall be obliged if you will buy it for me, or even "The Cavalier," which your mother tells me was likewise written by De Foe—though I can hardly think it—I shall be glad to have. Should you ever meet with a book called either "The Epitome of the Harleian Miscellany," or "Extracts from the Harleian Miscellany," one vol. very large quarto, not thick, I shall be obliged if you will buy it and make it a present to your mother from me. For these and any other purchases you may make for me I must insist on your indenting on my funds in your mother's hands. Are you acquainted with my friend Mr. Salmond? If you are not, I wish you would call on him when you have an opportunity. I shall enclose this to him, that he may have an opportunity of letting you know where he may be found. You will find him a man of strong sense, and a perfect gentleman in his manners, with one of the gentlest and kindest natures I ever met with. I have just got to the extremity of Hindostan, under the great chain of snowy mountains that extend from the Caspian to the confines of China. They are the most majestic sight I ever looked upon. There are views of them in England by the Daniels, which will give you a much clearer conception of them than any description I can give from a distant view of them. There was a letter written by the Court of Directors, and approved by all but one of their number, which was suppressed, or rather kept back, by the Board of Control, which throws great light on

Mr. Francis' speeches. It is published in the form of a pamphlet, and titled, "Copy of a Proposed Despatch to the Bengal Government, approved by twenty-three Directors, dated 3d April 1805. R. Wilks, printer, Chancery Lane." And I am told there is either another suppressed despatch published since, or else a remonstrance of the C. of D. on the suppression of the first. I have not seen this last, but am told it elucidates affairs in this quarter very considerably. There is so much danger of letters being intercepted, that few people care to write upon politics lest their letters should be published; by which means England is much in the dark on Indian affairs. I conclude Administration is very well pleased with the rod Bonaparte held over us in the East. They can by this means tell what they like and as they like. Put no more letters among the books; yours and Jane's were so much mildewed I had great difficulty in reading them. Remember me most affectionately to your mother, brothers, and sisters. May God bless you in this world, and most especially by a knowledge of Himself in the world to come. This is a knowledge I have only lately come at, and I find it full of peace.—I am, dear sir, ever affectionately yours,

T. P.

We can infer from this letter that De Quincey's interest in India, which remained keen to the end, was thus early stimulated by his correspondence with his uncle.

De Quincey returned to Oxford for a short time; but spent the earlier part of 1808 in London, where he had frequent opportunities of seeing Coleridge, and once more had it in his power to render him service. Coleridge at that time lived at the office of the "Courier" in the Strand; Mr. Daniel Stewart —one of the proprietors of that paper, and an intimate friend of Coleridge's—having given up to him for a time the use of some rooms there. "In such a situation, annoyed by the sound of feet passing his chamber door continually to the printing

rooms of this great establishment, and with no gentle ministrations of female hands to sustain his cheerfulness, naturally enough his spirits flagged. . . . I called upon him daily," says De Quincey, "and pitied his forlorn condition." Yet in spite of his circumstances, and the many deprivations they involved, not a few of the great and the high in rank were to be found making calls on the distressed philosopher. "There," says De Quincey, "I met Sir Humphrey Davy. Nowhere before or since have I seen a man who so felicitously caught the fascinating tone of high-bred urbanity, which distinguishes the better part of the British nobility." Lamb and Hazlitt and Godwin, too, with others, made their way to Coleridge's rickety chambers at the "Courier" office; so that here "high-thinking" and courtly-breeding were prone to combine themselves with "plain-living," unless indeed it might be in the "divine luxury" of opium, which Coleridge surely did not share with many of his guests.

De Quincey at this time had rooms at 82 Great Titchfield Street, but after resided with a college companion, Mr. Richard Smith, in Mary-le-bone. We find record of his keen concern in public matters in the following letter to Mr. Kelsall—"the state of things in Manchester" doubtless referring to the riot between the masters and the weavers, on May 24 and 25, which was quelled by the military:—

5 Northumberland Street, Mary-le-bone,
June 15, 1808.

Dear Sir,—I must trouble you to send me £30 to this place. If you have time to add a few lines on the real state of

things in Manchester, in which all here feel great interest from the newspaper accounts, I shall be much obliged to you.

I beg my kind respects to Mrs. Kelsall, and love to the children; and am, dear sir, your affectionate friend,

THOS. DE QUINCEY.

The following letter to his sister, then at Sidmouth, tells its own tale:—

5 NORTHUMBERLAND STREET, MARY-LE-BONE,
June 20th, 1808.

MY DEAR SISTER.—The Bible, I found, could not be finished in the time prescribed: but I ordered it, nevertheless, since I can send it or bring it to Sidmouth, or anywhere else, as Miss Brotherton directs. On further examination, it seems to me a very excellent Bible both for use and appearance. It has marginal references (as I think your Christmas letter directed). I gave the fullest directions for the binding, as that it should have an open back (which I suppose you forgot to mention), ribbons, &c., and that he must be frugal in his gilding, with which the binders absolutely yellow-wash books that they mean to make fine. I summed up or perorated by impressing on his misguided mind that it was to be "simply elegant" or "chastely magnificent," if he could understand those words; and if he could not, he was to take as his analogical *model* (or bright ideal) my coat; *i.e.*, that as my coat was to the ephemeral generations of coats, so was the binding to be in relation to all tawdry bindings; for that my coat, having lost its juvenile graces, had reached that tone of sober majesty, that *je ne sais quoi* of interesting fragility, which carried the mind of the spectator back to past ages, and to the contemplation of permanence amidst the revolutions of human affairs, &c., which was precisely the thing sought in a binding for any book that was to look massive and monumental, and anti-fugitive, and more like an inheritance than a purchase. The price, I find, will be six guineas, exclusive of the silver clasps, of which the binder cannot tell the price, some other trade or mystery claiming that part of the work.

Mr. Coleridge was greatly pleased to hear that my mother meant to be in Devonshire this summer, as he will himself be within five miles of Sidmouth in about a week (reckoning from

his own dates); and as he will have the use of his friend Stewart's carriage (if Stewart stays), will be able to visit you without difficulty. Coleridge left London about six days ago with Mr. Stewart on a visit into Kent. This day week he lectured at the Institution, and had his pocket picked of the main part of his lecture as he walked from the Strand; but, having notes, he managed to get through very well.

My friend Smith having gone down to Oxford for a fortnight, you must direct here, if you please, for the future. I am solicited to stay in London in order to be present at his marriage, which takes place on his return; but I suppose it is necessary to sport some gay things on such occasions (silk coat, perhaps, and cocked hat), isn't it? If so, I must abscond; though, as I am intimate with all parties, there will be some difficulty in that. The lady is a very extraordinary lady—nothing less than a female Crichton—painter, harpist, pianist, linguist; and her youngest sister one of the greatest beauties in England—both unaffected, wild-hearted girls. Pray counsel me on this disagreeable joyful occasion.

If you or Jane (to whom I desire my love, promising a full answer to all her letters in a very short time) want a guinea's worth of books for a shilling, I'm your agent, at a reasonable per centage.

Give my love to my mother, and kind remembrances to Miss Brotherton and Miss Gee.*

Believe me, my dear sister, ever your most affectionate brother,

THOS. DE QUINCEY.

De Quincey spent the latter portion of the year 1808 at Oxford, and towards its close returned to Grasmere. He remained under Wordsworth's roof till February 1809, having made arrangements for a permanent settlement there by taking a lease of the cottage which Wordsworth had quitted a short time before. He now spent some months visiting

* A family of Gees were second cousins of De Quincey; the head of the family, Mr. Gee, a banker at Boston in Lincolnshire, being one of his guardians.

friends and wandering aimlessly in Somersetshire, went back for a few weeks to Westmoreland, and then turned his steps to London. It was during his stay here that he performed for Wordsworth the service of seeing his pamphlet—"The Convention of Cintra"—through the press. He agreed with Wordsworth in the main on this great question, which was then stirring Europe; and instead of devoting his whole time in London, with wise forecast, to the endeavour to open up avenues for himself to communicate to the world some of his many ideas, as more practical and less devotedly friendly spirits might have done, he patiently revised and edited Wordsworth's pamphlet, adding an appendix, which the author declared was "done in a most masterly manner," as well he might. And in the preface to the last collected edition of Wordsworth's prose works which so eminently bear this record, De Quincey is recognised by the editor, the Rev. Mr. Grosart, in one of the most sympathetic and delicately-appreciative passages which we believe literature can show in recent times.

In a budget of Wordsworth's letters we find a comparatively large number bearing on this "Convention of Cintra" pamphlet, attesting the care with which De Quincey had done his work. Wordsworth is surprised at the felicity of some of the emendations; all, he says, are improvements. Miss Wordsworth writes:—"Soon you must have rest, and we shall all be thankful. You have indeed been a treasure to us while you have been in London, having spared my brother so much anxiety and care. We are very grateful to you." And Wordsworth him-

self hopes that De Quincey may soon be at Grasmere, where he may think of the pamphlet labours in quiet, "as a traveller thinks of a disagreeable journey which he has performed, and will not have to repeat."

De Quincey's visits to London in these years, 1808–9, and afterwards, had for their chief object his "keeping terms" with a view to being called to the bar. It was not at all likely that he would find legal studies much to his taste, notwithstanding that he had keen dialectic faculties that might have been educated in this direction. Writing of his visits to Lamb in 1804–5, he says, "Lamb lived in the Temple then; and I, who was not then, as I afterwards became, a student and member of the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, did not know much of the localities."

Meanwhile Miss Wordsworth was active in setting the cottage in order, as she had undertaken to do. We have many records in the letters before us of her zeal and untiring interest in discussion of the most desirable colours in carpets and curtains, and of the best styles of furniture. She finds a good reason for preferring mahogany to deal for bookshelves in the consideration "that native woods are dear; and that in case De Quincey should leave the country, and have a sale, no sort of wood sells so well at second-hand as mahogany." Thoughtful, careful, discreet Dorothy!

Returning to Westmoreland in November of 1809, "At last," De Quincey says, "I, the long-expected, made my appearance. Some little sensation did really and naturally attend my coming, for most of the

draperies belonging to beds, curtains, &c., had been sewed by the young women of that or the adjoining vales; and this had caused me to be talked of."

And so he entered on the occupation of the little cottage, which henceforth for a quarter of a century was to be closely identified with his name, after having "been hallowed, to my mind, by the seven years' occupation of that illustrious tenant [Wordsworth], during perhaps the happiest period of his life—the early years of his marriage and of the first acquaintance with parental affections."

"Cottage immortal in my remembrance!" he exclaims; "as well it might be, for this cottage I retained through just seven-and-twenty years: this was the scene of struggles the most tempestuous and bitter within my own mind: this the scene of my despondency and unhappiness: this the scene of my happiness,—a happiness which justified the faith of man's *earthly* lot as upon the whole a dowry from heaven! It was, in its exterior, not so much a picturesque cottage—for its outlines and proportions, its windows and its chimneys, were not sufficiently marked and effective for the picturesque—as it was lovely: one gable-end was, indeed, most gorgeously appareled in ivy, and so far picturesque; but the principal side, or what might be called the front, as it presented itself to the road and was most illuminated by windows, was embossed—nay, it may be said, smothered—in roses of different species, amongst which the moss and the damask prevailed. These, together with as much jasmine and honeysuckle as could find room to flourish, were not only in them-

selves a most interesting garniture for a humble cottage wall, but they also performed the acceptable service of breaking the unpleasant glare that would else have wounded the eye, from the whitewash,—a glare which, having been renewed amongst the general preparations against my coming to inhabit the house, could not be sufficiently subdued in tone for the artist's eye until the storms of several winters had weather-stained and tamed down its brilliancy. . . . My cottage, wanting this primary feature of elegance in the constituents of Westmoreland architecture—the peculiar chimney—and wanting also another very interesting feature of the older architecture, annually becoming more and more rare, viz., the outside gallery (which is sometimes merely of wood, but is much more striking when provided for in the original construction of the house, and completely *enfoncé* in the masonry), could not rank high among the picturesque houses of the country,—those, at least, which are such by virtue of their architectural form. It was, however, very irregular in its outline to the rear, by the aid of one little projecting room, and also of a stable and little barn in immediate contact with the dwelling-house. It had, besides, the great advantage of a varying height, two sides being about fifteen or sixteen feet high from the exposure of both stories; whereas the other two, being swathed about by a little orchard that rose rapidly and unequally towards the vast mountain range in the rear, exposed only the upper story; and, consequently, on those sides the elevation rarely rose beyond seven or eight feet. All these accidents of irregular form and outline gave to the house some

little pretension to a picturesque character; and whilst its 'separable accidents' (as the logicians say), its bowery roses and jasmine, clothed it in loveliness—its associations with Wordsworth crowned it, to my mind, with historical dignity; and, finally, my own twenty-seven years' off-and-on connection with it have, by ties personal and indestructible, endeared it to my heart so unspeakably beyond all other houses, that even now I rarely dream through four nights running that I do not find myself (and others beside) in some one of those rooms; and, most probably, the last cloudy delirium of approaching death will re-instate me in some chamber of that same humble cottage. 'What a tale,' says Foster, the eloquent essayist—'what a tale could be told by many a room, were the walls endowed with memory or speech!' Or, in the more impassioned expressions of Wordsworth—

> 'Ah! what a warning for a thoughtless man,
> Could field, or grove, or any spot of earth,
> Show to his eye an image of the pang
> Which it hath witnessed; render back an echo
> Of the sad steps by which it hath been trod!'

And equally affecting it would be if such a field or such a house could render up the echoes of joy, of festal music, of jubilant laughter—the innocent mirth of infants, or the gaiety, not less innocent, of youthful mothers—equally affecting would be such a reverberation of forgotten household happiness, with the re-echoing records of sighs and groans. And few indeed are the houses that, within a period no longer than from the beginning of the century to 1835 (so long was it either mine or

Wordsworth's), have crowded such ample materials for these echoes, whether sorrowful or joyous."

And so we see De Quincey settled in Grasmere with friends scattered round him not far off; all the repose of home seems to be about him—to be perfected perhaps ere long.

In his English Note-books, we find Nathaniel Hawthorne saying, in a description of a tour in Westmoreland:—

"We passed The Nab, in which De Quincey formerly lived, and where Hartley Coleridge lived and died. It is a small, buff-tinted, plastered stone cottage, I should think of a very humble class originally; but it now looks as if persons of taste might sometime or other have sat down in it, and caused flowers to spring up about it. It is very agreeably situated under the great precipitous hill, and with Rydal Water close at hand, on the other side of the road."

This, however, refers to the house possessed by Mr. Simpson, who afterwards became De Quincey's father-in-law. De Quincey only occupied it for sometime in later years, when the increase of the family and the vast increase of books rendered necessary greater accommodation than was to be found in the cottage at Townend, which remained the real headquarters so long as he was in Grasmere. We mention this here to explain references to the Nab which will soon occur.

CHAPTER VIII.

SETTLEMENT AT GRASMERE.

THE influences which had drawn De Quincey to Grasmere soon widened out, showing a far-reaching horizon. For not only did he find the valley conducive to meditation, fed as this meditation was by daily society with Wordsworth, but he became the friend and confidant of Wordsworth's children, whose attractions finally outdid those even of their father's philosophy. Nay, he soon realised, in his own experience, the truth of Wordsworth's suggestive lines:—

> "*Love had he found in huts where poor men lie;*
> His daily teachers were the woods and rills,
> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills;"

And his interest in the familiar cares and difficulties of his humbler neighbours and friends furnished an unceasing source of relief and ministration. Not that he devoted himself to helping in any set and ordered way; only that his sympathies were healthily appealed to and kept active as they could never have

been in a great city, or in any district where the dream-side of his being was not also appealed to by sights and scenes in which the pathetic glory of nature answered so far to his own yearning. This, in De Quincey, was the condition of his retaining any hold on ordinary human affections beyond those of family, and as yet he was alone. So that his earlier residence in Grasmere may be said to have done much to maintain that balance which might so easily have been disturbed by the seclusion to which he would have been tempted or driven in circumstances that surrounded him with repressing squalor. This is what he means when in one place he declares an absolute need for poetic refinement in his surroundings. And it afforded the most immediate outlet for the faculties that were most in danger from the opium habit that soon began to grow upon him.

Over and above the happy conditions due to natural influences, he was thrown amidst a society singularly fitted to furnish the qualifying effects he most required in social intercourse. It was here that he first met Professor Wilson; here that he seemed to gain back a part of himself in Charles Lloyd; here that he got to know Southey and many others; on whom, if we must regretfully say it, he was thrown more and more as he was gradually repelled from Wordsworth. That repulsion, gradually passing into something approaching to alienation, it is inevitable we should refer to; but it shall be touched as delicately as is consistent with the truth of our narrative, out of deference to the dead, whom we all so deeply reverence. But it needs to be said gene-

rally here, that the very value that arises to us from the *teachings* of Wordsworth, could not have been so great, if he had been gifted with more of humour and dramatic sympathy, which might have had the effect of loosening, so to say, the strings of his instrument, so that the lonely winds could not have so effectively played upon them. To be true they must be kept in tension at once to resist and receive and transmute to music. And so he, more easily than most poets could set aside, we can well believe, with a certain aspect of arrogance, what seemed to conflict, or even threatened momentarily to conflict, with his own moods, opinions, receptivities. Discursiveness, the habit of yielding to simple impulse, and *this in many directions*, was not likely long to remain congenial to him. His own genius was alien to it, and he never felt the need of cultivating sympathy in this direction. It was well for his poetry—his invaluable gift to us—that he never did become consciously alive to his own defects in this respect, for else it would certainly have lost the simple, elevated unity it bears; but, at the same time, it may often have been hard for those in daily association with him, unless, indeed, they surrendered readily their own impulses in favour of his powerful if lofty will. De Quincey, at all events, states that never after the first year or so of introduction, had he felt it possible to draw the bonds of friendship closer. Coleridge, who had said that femineity was the mental constitution of true genius, after long experience, declared of Wordsworth: "Of all men I ever knew Wordsworth has the least femineity in his mind"—a confession which, coming from

such a source, may be held conclusive as to certain solitary unassimilative elements in Wordsworth's character.

In contemporary memoirs, and in other records connected with Wordsworth, we can catch clearly enough the note of extreme, almost austere, self-dependence, rendering him in one way truly admirable, but in another all too indifferent to the less impalpable shades of feeling or of sensitiveness in other men. In such types success, though it seldom develops anything akin to weak vanity, invariably confirms a certain severity and cold repose far from favourable to genial companionship. Wordsworth's companions, indeed, were the rills, the mountains, and the wild creatures that dwell there; the clouds, the trees, the little flowers, the holy winds blowing their trumpets from the steeps; and the quickness of his ear for their secret voices might have been spoiled had he been inclined to listen more anxiously for the voices of his fellows. But his self-dependence and severity called to their aid an impetuosity not always so beautiful. The following incident illustrates this trait, and shows how Southey might well have found cause for coldness—lover of fine books as he was, and punctiliously neat and orderly in everything—person, and house, and library alike:—

"Wordsworth [in Southey's library] took down a volume of 'Burke.' Fortunately, and by a special providence for him, tea was proceeding at the time. Dry toast requires butter; butter requires knives; and knives then lay on the table; but sad it was for the virgin purity of Mr. Burke's as yet unturned pages, that every knife bore upon its blade testi-

monies of the service it had rendered. But Wordsworth

> 'Looked at the knife that caused his pain,
> And looked and sighed, and looked and sighed again;'

and then, after this momentary tribute to regret, he tore his way into the heart of the volume with this knife that left its greasy honours behind it upon every page. This personal experience first brought me acquainted with Wordsworth's intense impatience for one moment's delay that would have brought a remedy; and yet the reader may believe that it is no affectation in me to say that fifty such cases could have given me but little pain, when I explain that whatever could be made good with money at that time I did not regard."

It must not be supposed, however, that any real rupture took place between Wordsworth and De Quincey. A lengthened correspondence shows that, in spite of a certain lack of social sympathy in Wordsworth, realised by De Quincey at an early period, they remained for many years on such terms of friendship as was consistent with the exchange of mutual good offices, and various letters, which shall be referred to at the proper places, will suffice to attest this.

For a time De Quincey had been a guest of Wordsworth at Allan Bank. He appears to have been a favourite with the whole family, entering so readily into all their projects and joys and sorrows, that he was more like a brother than aught else. For nearly a couple of years, at all events, after his settlement in Grasmere, he was almost a daily visitant at Wordsworth's. During the latter part of the year

1809, and the greater part of 1810, Coleridge was a guest there; and it could hardly be but that his presence operated as a mutually attractive medium. We have this note of one of Coleridge's propensities at that time, proceeding out of his habit of accumulating volumes whether at home, with friends, or with strangers:—

"The next opportunity I had of seeing Coleridge was at the Lakes, in the winter of 1809, and up to the autumn of the following year. During this period it was that he carried on the original publication of 'The Friend;' and for much the greater part of the time I saw him daily. He lived as a visitor in the house occupied by Mr. Wordsworth [Allan Bank], barely one mile from my own cottage, where I had a considerable library. Many of the books being German, Coleridge borrowed them in great numbers. Having a general licence from me to use them as he would, he was in the habit of accumulating them so largely at Allan Bank, that sometimes as many as five hundred were absent at once: which I mention, in order to notice a practice of Coleridge's, indicating his very scrupulous honour in what regarded the rights of ownership. Literary people are not always so strict in respecting property of this description; and I know more than one celebrated man, who professes, as a maxim, that he holds it no duty of honour to restore a borrowed book; not to speak of many less celebrated persons, who without openly professing such a principle do, however, in fact, exhibit a lax morality in such cases. The more honourable it is to Coleridge, who had means so trifling of buying books for himself that, to prevent my flocks from

mixing and being confounded with the flocks already folded at Allan Bank (his own and Wordsworth's), or rather that they *might* mix without danger, he duly inscribed my name in the blank leaves of every volume; a fact which became rather painfully known to me; for, as he had chosen to dub me *Esquire*, many years after this, it cost myself and a female friend some weeks of labour to hunt out these multitudinous memorials, and to erase this heraldic addition; which else had the appearance to a stranger of having been conferred by myself."

As Wordsworth's attraction for De Quincey gradually waned, that of the children at Allan Bank grew; and many are the bright suggestive pictures of them we have met with. They were always in his thoughts. Every one of Miss Wordsworth's letters shows the hold he had on their hearts. When Johnny comes from school she tells how his mother said to him, "Here is a letter from"—— "From Mr. de Quincey," he replied; and how, with his own ingenuous blush and smile, he came forward to the fireside with a quicker pace, and asked her to read the letter; how, when all was over, he said, "But when will he come? Maybe he'll tell us in his next letter;" and how, when he has finished his prayers, in which he makes a petition for his good friends, he says "Mr. de Quincey is one of my friends." Little "Tom," too, she tells, often lisps out his name, and will rejoice with the happiest at his return,—when he comes with the black hat he has bought for Johnny, as promised, and the carriage he has got for Johnny and Sissy, though that proposal brings a protest from Miss Wordsworth, who seriously

grieves that so much money should be expended for a carriage for them when they are completely happy and satisfied with their own, which answers every purpose of the other, though it is hard to pull up hill, but that, thinks Miss Wordsworth, makes it "the better exercise for them."

Of the little Catherine Wordsworth, whose touching death added another to the mystic persons of De Quincey's dream-world, he is able to tell us that, "while yet a mere infant, she noticed me more than any other person, excepting, of course, her mother." De Quincey's love of children was intense, and his power of pleasing and amusing them something astonishing in a man, in many respects, so secluded and self-involved. And there were other children, of whom he was passionately fond, those of Charles Lloyd, for example, whose house in later years became for him a centre of sad and joyous memories. It was at Lloyd's house that De Quincey first saw Professor Wilson, and this is how he speaks of that circumstance, which needs fullest celebration in any memoir of the English opium-eater; their friendship not only yielding much to literature, but remaining to the end unbroken, more tender and brotherlike, indeed, at the end than at its opening :—

"When I first knew them, Low Brathay [the residence of Lloyd] was distinguished above every other house at the head of Windermere, or within ten miles of that neighbourhood, by the judicious assortment of its dinner-parties, and the gaiety of its *soirées dansantes*. These parties were never crowded; poor Lloyd rarely danced himself; but it gladdened his benevolent heart to see the young and blooming

floating through the mazes of the dances then fashionable, whilst he sat by looking on, at times with pleasure, from his sympathy with the pleasure of others; at times pursuing some animated discussion with a literary friend; at times lapsing into profound reverie. At some of these dances it was that I first saw Wilson of Elleray (Professor Wilson), in circumstances of animation and buoyant with youthful spirits, under the excitement of lights, wine, and above all, of female company. He, by the way, was the best male dancer (not professional) I have ever seen; and this advantage he owed entirely to the extraordinary strength of his foot in all its parts, to its peculiarly happy conformation, and to the accuracy of his ear; for as to instruction, I have often understood from his family that he never had any. Here also danced the future wife of Professor Wilson, Miss Jane Penny, at that time the leading belle of the Lake country."

The two, however, did not get acquainted then—as indeed, there might have been some incongruity in the idea of two philosophers becking and bowing to each other in the pauses of a quadrille—that was, perhaps fitly, reserved for Wordsworth and Wordsworth's house; and this is the account of it, given with all De Quincey's circumstantial precision and subdued *naïveté*:—

"My introduction to him—setting apart the introducee himself—was memorable from one circumstance—viz., the person of the introducer. William Wordsworth it was, who in the vale of Grasmere, if it can interest you to know the place, and in the latter end of 1808, if you can be supposed to care

about the time, did me the favour of making me known to John Wilson, or as I might say (upon the Scottish fashion of designating men from their territorial pretensions) to Elleray. I remember the whole scene as circumstantially as if it had been yesterday. In the Vale of Grasmere—that peerless little vale, which you and Gray the poet and so many others have joined in admiring as the very Eden of English beauty, peace, and pastoral solitude—you may possibly recall, even from that flying glimpse you had of it, a modern house called Allan Bank, standing under a low screen of woody rocks which descend from the hill of Silver How, on the western side of the lake. This house had been recently built by a worthy merchant of Liverpool; but for some reason of no importance to you or me, not being immediately wanted for the family of the owner, had been let for a term of three years to Mr. Wordsworth. At the time I speak of, both Mr. Coleridge and myself were on a visit to Mr. Wordsworth; and one room on the ground-floor, designed for a breakfasting-room, which commands a sublime view of the three mountains—Fairfield, Arthur's Chair, and Seat Sandal (the first of them within about 400 feet of the highest mountains in Great Britain)—was then occupied by Mr. Coleridge as a study. On this particular day, the sun having only just set, it naturally happened that Mr. Coleridge—whose nightly vigils were long—had not yet come down to breakfast; meantime, and until the epoch of the Coleridgean breakfast should arrive, his study was lawfully disposable to profaner uses. Here, therefore, it was, that, opening the door hastily in quest of a book, I found seated, and

in earnest conversation ; two gentlemen : one of them my host, Mr. Wordsworth, at that time about thirty-eight years old ; the other was a younger man by good sixteen or seventeen years, in a sailor's dress, manifestly in robust health, *fervidus juventa*, and wearing upon his countenance a powerful expression of ardour and animated intelligence, mixed with much good nature. '*Mr. Wilson of Elleray*'—delivered as the formula of introduction, in the deep tones of Mr. Wordsworth—at once banished the momentary surprise I felt on finding a stranger where I had expected nobody, and substituted a surprise of another kind : I now well understood who it was that I saw ; and there was no wonder in his being at Allan Bank, Elleray standing within nine miles ; but (as usually happens in such cases), I felt a shock of surprise on seeing a person so little corresponding to the one I had at first half-consciously prefigured. . . . Figure to yourself a tall man about six feet high, within half an inch or so, built with tolerable appearance of strength ; but at the date of my description (that is, in the very spring-tide and bloom of youth), wearing, for the predominant character of his person, lightness and agility or (in our Westmoreland phrase) *lishness*, he seemed framed with an express view to gymnastic exercises of every sort. . . . Ask in one of your public libraries for that little quarto edition of the 'Rhetorical Works of Cicero,' edited by Schutz (the same who edited 'Æschylus'), and you will there see (as a frontispiece to the first volume) a reduced whole-length of Cicero from the antique, which in the mouth and chin, and indeed generally, if I do not greatly forget, will give you a

lively representation of the contour and expression of Professor Wilson's face. . . . Of all this array of personal features, however, I then saw nothing at all, my attention being altogether occupied with Mr. Wilson's conversation and demeanour, which were in the highest degree agreeable; the points which chiefly struck me being the humility and gravity with which he spoke of himself, his large expansion of heart, and a certain air of noble frankness which overspread everything he said; he seemed to have an intense enjoyment of life; indeed, being young, rich, healthy, and full of intellectual activity, it could not be very wonderful that he should feel happy and pleased with himself and others; but it was somewhat unusual to find that so rare an assemblage of endowments had communicated no tinge of arrogance to his manner, or at all disturbed the general temperance of his mind."

Elsewhere, and with some indescribable savour of humorous reserve, De Quincey refers to those early escapades of Wilson's amongst gypsies and Bohemians of the lower order:—

"And, although a man of prudence cannot altogether approve of his throwing himself into the convivial society of gypsies, tinkers, potters (*i.e.*, earthenware sellers), strolling players, &c., nevertheless it tells altogether in favour of Professor Wilson's generosity of mind, that he was ever ready to forego his advantages of station and birth, and to throw himself fearlessly upon his own native powers as man opposed to man."

Mrs. Gordon, in her admirable memoir of her father, thus refers to the origin of the friendship so begun

between Wilson and De Quincey and its genuine unbroken character:—

"Strange to say, they had when at Oxford remained unknown to each other; but here, attracted by the same influence, a mutual friendship was not long in being formed, which endured—independent of years of separation and many caprices of fortune—till death divided them. The graces of nature with which De Quincey was endowed fascinated my father, as they did every mind that came within the sphere of his extraordinary power in the days of his mental vigour. . . . From 1809, when he was his companion in pedestrian rambles and the sharer of his purse, till the hour of his death, that friendship remained unbroken, though sometimes in his strange career, months or years would elapse without my father either seeing or hearing from him. If this singular man's life were to be written truthfully no one would believe it, so strange the tale would seem. . . . He, indeed, knew how to analyse the human heart through all its deep windings, but he offered no key of access to his own. In manner no man was more courteous or naturally dignified; the strange vicissitudes of his life had given him a presence of mind which never deserted him, even in positions the most trying. It was this quality that gave him, in combination with his remarkable powers of persuasion, command over all minds; the ignorant were silenced by awe, and the refined fascinated as by the spell of a serpent. . . . Wilson loved him to the last, and better than any man he understood him. In the expansiveness of his own heart, he made allowances for faults which experience taught him were the growth

of circumstance. It may seem strange that men so opposite in character were allied to each other by the bonds of friendship; but I think that all experience shows that sympathy, not similarity, draws men to one another in that sacred relation. . . . Many were the pleasant days spent by these friends together; many the joyous excursions among the hills and valleys of the Lake country. One memorable gathering is still remembered in the lone places of the mountains, and spoken of to the stranger wandering there. One lovely summer-day, in the year 1809, the solitudes of Eskdale were invaded by what seemed a little army of anglers. It consisted of thirty-two persons, ten of whom were servants brought to look after the tents and baggage necessary for a week's sojourn in the mountains. This camp, with its furniture, was carried by twelve ponies. Among the gentlemen of the party were Wilson, Wordsworth, De Quincey, Alex. Blair, two Messrs. Astley, Humphries, and some others whose names have escaped notice. After passing through Eskdale, and that solemn tract of country which opens upon Wastwater, they there pitched their tent, and roaming far and near from that point, each took his own way till evening hours assembled them together. The beauty of the scenes through which they rambled, the fine weather, and, above all, that geniality of taste and disposition which had brought them together, made the occasion one of unforgotten satisfaction. It formed the theme of one of Wilson's most beautiful minor poems, entitled "The Angler's Tent," which was written soon after at Elleray, where Wordsworth was then living."

In the beginning of 1809, Wilson took an excursion into Scotland, and asked De Quincey to accompany him in this letter:—

"My Dear de Quincey,—I am obliged to leave this to-morrow for Glasgow. I therefore trouble you with this note, in case you should think of coming over during my absence. I expect to return to Elleray in a few days; yet there is an uncertainty attending every motion of mine, and possibly of yours also. If you are ready for a start, I will go with you to-morrow on foot through Kentmere and Hawesdale to Penrith, and on Monday you can easily return by Ulleswater to Grasmere. The fine weather may induce you. If you feel a wish to look at Glasgow and Edinburgh, would you take a trip with me on the top of the coach? I will pledge myself to return with you within eight days. If so, or if you will agree to the first plan only, my pony or horse is with my servant who carries this, and you can come here upon it. I hope you will do so. There is no occasion for a wardrobe. I take nothing with me, and we can get a change of linen. The expense will be small to us.—Yours ever affectionately, John Wilson.

"Elleray, *Saturday*, 1809."

To the proposal that De Quincey should accompany him through Kentmere and Hawesdale to Penrith—one of the most delightful of pedestrian journeys—Mrs. Gordon appends this note:—

"The proposal to walk over so much ground proclaims De Quincey to have been no weak pedestrian. Although he was a man considerably under

height and slender of form, he was capable of undergoing great fatigue, and took constant exercise. The very fact of his being a walking companion of Wilson speaks well for his strength, which was not unfrequently taxed when such a tryst was kept. Perhaps, in later years, of the two men he preserved his activity more entire."

De Quincey, however, was unable to go to Scotland at this time, owing to his having arranged to spend a part of the summer in Somersetshire. But the two friends had already begun to project bolder enterprises, in which, perhaps, they found as deep a pleasure as if they had been able actually to carry them into practice—the more that the thought of them remained unsullied by the shadows of such drawbacks as are so apt to mix themselves with the memories of pilgrimages really performed. De Quincey tells us that Professor Wilson had even planned a journey into Central Africa, the objects of which should be to visit the city of Timbuctoo, and solve (if possible) the great outstanding problem of the source of the Niger. This enterprise being found more than impracticable, it had to yield to other adventurous projects (for it was more the love of adventure than interest in geographical discovery by which Wilson was impelled), and in one of these De Quincey was associated. On September 12, 1809, we find Wilson thus writing to De Quincey at Bristol from Elleray:—

My Dear de Quincey,—I write you a few lines, to make a proposal which I hope you will not think unwarranted by the short acquaintance we have had with each other. I intend going to Spain in a few weeks, to traverse as great a part of it

as circumstances may allow; and knowing the deep interest you take in the destiny of the Spaniards, I have thought of communicating to you my design. Mr. Wordsworth, who, with his wife, is now staying at Elleray, has strongly recommended to me to write you on this subject. My plan is to go by packet to Lisbon early in October. My stay in the Peninsula will on no account exceed six months. An immediate answer will gratify me. Should you enter into this scheme, I will either meet you in London at the time you mention or remain here till you come down. In hopes that you will determine to go, believe me most sincerely and respectfully yours,

JOHN WILSON.

Recalling these projected journeys of Wilson, De Quincey in one place takes occasion to associate them with a characteristic trait of Wilson:—

"Yet, as the stimulus to danger, in one shape or another, was at that time of life perhaps essential to Wilson's comfort, he soon substituted another scheme, which at this day might be accomplished with ease and safety enough, but in the year 1809 (under the rancorous system of Napoleon) was full of hazard. In this scheme he was so good as to associate myself as one of his travelling companions, together with an earlier friend of his own—an Englishman, of a philosophical turn of mind—with whom he had been a fellow-student at Glasgow; and we were certainly all three of an age and character to have enjoyed the expedition in the very highest degree, had the events of the war allowed us to realise our plan. The plan was as follows: from Falmouth, by one of the regular packets, we were to have sailed to the Tagus, and, landing wherever accident should allow us, to purchase mules, hire Spanish servants, and travel extensively in Spain and Portugal for eight or nine months; thence, by such of the islands in the Medi-

terranean as particularly interested us, we were gradually to have passed into Greece, and thence to Constantinople. Finally, we were to have visited the Troad, Syria, Egypt, and perhaps Nubia. I feel it almost ludicrous to sketch the outline of so extensive a tour, no part of which was ever executed: such a Barmecide feast is laughable in the rehearsal. Yet it is bare justice to ourselves to say, that on our part there was no slackness or *make-believe;* what put an extinguisher upon our project was the entrance of Napoleon into Spain, his immediate advance upon Madrid, and the wretched catastrophe of the expedition so miserably misconducted under Sir John Moore. . . . It was no joke, as it had been in past times, for an Englishman to be found wandering in Continental regions; the pretence that he was, or might be, a spy—a charge so easy to make, so impossible to throw off—at once sufficed for the hanging of the unhappy traveller. . . . These atrocities had interrupted our Continental schemes, and we were thus led the more to roam amongst home scenes. How it happened I know not—for we had wandered together often in England—but, by some accident, it was not until 1814 that we visited Edinburgh together. Then it was that I first saw Scotland."

This leads us, not unnaturally, to remark on a characteristic hinted at in the introductory chapter. De Quincey, in spite of his dreaminess and devotion to study, loved long walks, and had a keen interest in certain kinds of sport, which his residence in Grasmere put it in his power fully to gratify, without his doing despite to the other demands of his temperament. He

even took to long wanderings with Ritson, a genuine old Laker, referred to by Christopher North as a famous wrestler, who had won many a county belt. This Ritson had once thrown Wilson twice out of three falls, confessing, however, that he found his opponent "a varra bad un to lick," as well he might, seeing that in running he was beaten by Wilson, who could jump twelve yards in three jumps, with a heavy stone in each hand, while Ritson could only manage eleven and three-quarters.

In all these matters Wilson found in De Quincey an interested friend, who, if he was not himself of sufficient physique to become a competitor, had a place in his memory for curious facts bearing upon them, and could bring these forward fresh and *apropos*, making his classical studies occasionally yield the most original and surprising commentaries. But the peculiar vein of meditative self-seclusion, erratic sympathy, and dreamy overcharged sentiment, demanded its own peculiar stimulant. Therefore we hear of other rambles, taken under other circumstances, with contrasted accompaniment:—

"I took the very greatest delight in nocturnal walks through the silent valleys of Cumberland and Westmoreland. What I liked in this solitary rambling was, to trace the course of the evening through its household hieroglyphics from the windows which I passed or saw; to see the blazing fires shining through the windows of the houses, lurking in nooks far apart from neighbours; sometimes in solitudes that seemed abandoned to the owl, to catch the sounds of household mirth; then, some miles further, to perceive the time of going to bed; then the gradual

sinking to silence of the house; then the drowsy reign of the cricket; at intervals to hear church-clocks or a little solitary chapel bell, under the brow of mighty hills, proclaiming the hours of the night, and flinging out their sullen knells over the graves where the 'rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep'—where the strength and the loveliness of Elizabeth's time, or Cromwell's, and through so many fleeting generations that have succeeded, had long ago sunk to rest. Such was the sort of pleasure which I reaped in my nightly walks—of which, however, considering the suspicions of lunacy which it sometimes awoke, the less I say, perhaps, the better."

Of a kindred character, but striking a still deeper chord of sensibilities, leaving a more distinct impress on the phantasy as suggesting far more of the pathetic wonder and mystery of life—is the record we have of his sorrow at the death of Catherine Wordsworth, and his unique experiences arising out of it. Miss Wordsworth, in her letter intimating to De Quincey the death of his favourite, tells him that little Catherine "never forgot Quincey."

This letter was immediately answered by a request for further particulars; and we find De Quincey writing again to Miss Wordsworth on June 21st as follows—his mind concentrated on little Kate and all things associated with her:—

Sunday Evening, June 21st.

My Dear Friend,—I thank you much for your long and most affecting letter. One passage troubled me greatly; I mean when you speak of our dear child's bodily sufferings. Her father and I trusted that she had been insensible to pain—that being generally the case, as I believe, in convulsions. But thank God! whatever were her sufferings, they were short in

comparison of what she would have had in most other complaints; and now at least, sweet love! she is at rest and in peace. It being God's pleasure to recall His innocent creature to Himself, perhaps in no other way could it have been done more mercifully to her, though to the bystanders for the time few could be more terrible to behold. How much more suffering would she have had in a common fever from cold; and what anguish to us all if she had called upon our names in delirium, and fancied that we would not come to her relief! This I remember witnessing at my father's bedside on the morning when he died. I was but a child, and had seen too little of my father to have much love for him; but I remember being greatly affected at hearing him moan out to my mother a few minutes before he died, "O Eliza, Eliza! why will you never come and help me to raise this great weight?"

I was truly glad to find from your account of her funeral, that those who attended were in general such as would more or less unaffectedly partake in your sorrow. It has been an awful employment to me the recollecting where I was and how occupied when this solemn scene was going on. At that time I must have been in the streets of London; tired, I remember, for I had just recovered from sickness—but cheerful, and filled with pleasant thoughts. Ah! what a mortal revulsion of heart if any sudden revelation should have laid open to my sight what scene was passing in Grasmere Vale! On the night June 3d–4th, I remember, from a particular circumstance which happened in the room below me, that I lay awake all night long in serious thought, but yet as cheerful as if not a dream were troubling any one that I loved. As well as I recollect, I must have been closing my eyes in sleep just about the time that my blessed Kate was closing hers for ever! Oh, that I might have died for her or with her! Willingly, my dear friend, I would have done this. I do not say it from any sudden burst of anguish, but as a feeling that I have ejaculated in truth and sincerity a thousand times since I heard of her death. If I had seen her in pain I could have done anything for her; and reason it was that I should, for she was a blessing to *me*, and gave me many and many an hour of happy thoughts that I can never have again.

You tell me to think of her with tender cheerfulness; but, far from that, dear friend, my heart grows heavier and heavier every

day. More and more of her words, and looks, and actions keep coming up before me; and there is nobody to whom I can speak about her. I have struggled with this dejection as much as I can; twice I have passed the evening with Mr. Coleridge, and I have every day attempted to study. But after all I find it more tolerable to me to let my thoughts take their natural course, than to put such constraint upon them. But let me not trouble you with complaints, who have sorrow enough to bear of your own, and to witness in others.

Yesterday I heard from Mr. Wordsworth, and was grieved to hear of Mrs. Wordsworth's state of mind; but I knew that it could not be otherwise. She would have borne her loss better, I doubt not, if she had been on the spot. As it is, this great affliction would come upon her just when her mind would be busiest about thoughts of returning to her children. I think of her often with the greatest love and compassion.

This afternoon I was putting my clothing and books into the trunk. Whilst I was about it, I remembered that it was the 21st of June, and must therefore be exactly a quarter of a year since I left Grasmere; for I left it on Sunday, March 22d, this day thirteen weeks; therefore I saw Kate for the last time. The last words which she said to me (except that perhaps she might call out some words of farewell in company with the rest who were present) I think were these:—The children were speaking to me altogether, and I was saying one thing to one and another to another, and she, who could not speak loud enough to overpower the other voices, had got up on a chair, and putting her hand upon my mouth, she said, with her sweet importunateness of action and voice, "Kinsey! Kinsey! what a bring Katy from London?" I believe she said it twice; and I remember that her mother noticed the earnestness and intelligence of her manner, and looked at me and smiled. This was the last time that I heard her sweet voice distinctly, and I shall never hear one like it again! God bless you, my dear friend.—Ever yours,

T. DE QUINCEY.

N.B.—Mary Dawson* would surely suppose that, as a mark of respect to your family, I should wish her to get mourning at my expense. If she has not done this, pray tell her that I

* Mary Dawson was the servant in charge of his cottage.

particularly desire it may be done. I forgot to mention it before.

I shall leave London not earlier than Tuesday, nor later than Wednesday. I have been detained in a way that I could not prevent. How soon I get to Grasmere will depend on the accidents of meeting conveyances, &c. I trust I shall find you all well.

I wrote a second letter to you last Monday, June 15th.

De Quincey's grief and helpless prostration are described by him in his most characteristic manner by way of giving full effect to his dream-delusions.

"It was the radiant spirit of joyousness making solitude for her blithe society, and filling from morning till night the air 'with gladness and involuntary song'—this it was which so fascinated my heart, that I became blindly, doatingly, in a servile degree, devoted to this one affection. In the spring of 1812, I went up to London; and early in June, by a letter from Miss Wordsworth, her aunt, I learned the terrific news (for such to me it was), that she had died suddenly. She had gone to bed in good health about sunset on June 4; was found speechless a little before midnight; and died in the early dawn, just as the first gleams of morning began to appear over Seat Sandal and Fairfield, the mightiest of the Grasmere barriers, about an hour perhaps before sunrise. Never, perhaps, from the foundations of those mighty hills, was there so fierce a convulsion of grief as mastered my faculties on receiving that heart-shattering news. Over and above my excess of love for her, I had always viewed her as an impersonation of the dawn and the spirit of infancy; and this abstraction seated in her person, together with the visionary sort of connection, which even in her

parting hours she assumed with the summer sun, by turning her immersion into the cloud of death with the rising and the setting of that fountain of life—these combined impressions recoiled so violently into a contrast or polar antithesis to the image of death, that each exalted and heightened the other. I returned hastily to Grasmere." He tells us that he now abandoned himself to his grief, and often spent the night on her grave, "not as may readily be supposed," he says, "in any parade of grief; on the contrary, in that quiet valley of simple shepherds, I was secure enough from observation, until morning light began to return; but in mere intensity of sick, frantic yearning after neighbourhood to the darling of my heart. Many readers will have seen in Sir Walter Scott's 'Demonology,' and in Dr. Abercrombie's 'Inquiries concerning the Intellectual Powers,' some remarkable illustrations of the creative faculties awakened in the eye or other organs by peculiar states of passion; and it is worthy of a place amongst cases of the kind, that in many solitary fields, at a considerable elevation above the level of the valleys—fields, which in the local dialect are called 'intacks'—my eye was haunted at times, in broad noonday (oftener, however, in the afternoon) with a facility, but at times with a necessity, for weaving out of a few simple elements a perfect picture of little Kate in the attitude and onward motion of walking. I resorted constantly to these 'intacks,' as places where I was little liable to disturbance; and usually I saw her at the opposite side of the field, which might sometimes be at a distance of a quarter of a mile, generally not so much.

Almost always she carried a basket on her head; and usually the first hint upon which the figure arose commenced in wild plants, such as tall ferns or the purple flowers of the foxglove; but whatever might be the colours of the forms, uniformly the same little full-formed figure arose, uniformly dressed in the little blue bedgown and black skirt of Westmoreland, and uniformly with the air of advancing motion. Throughout part of June, July, and part of August, in fact, throughout the summer, this frenzy of grief continued." It passed from him suddenly, with a nervous sensation of sickness.

Not long afterwards, he received in a letter from Wordsworth the news of another bereavement—the close of the letter being most tender and touching in its simplicity of pathos.

The following letter addressed by De Quincey to his sister shows the friendly terms on which at this time he stood with Southey, and is quoted here chiefly because of the reference to the death of Thomas Wordsworth :—

GRASMERE, *Sunday Night, January 3d*, 1813.

MY DEAR SISTER,—Your letter having lain some days at the post, and James having come round by London, they did not reach me so soon as you may have calculated. I wrote to Coleridge by last Friday morning's post, begging him to forward, under cover to Westhay, whatever letters he could furnish for Sicily and Malta. By the time this reaches you, therefore, you will possibly have heard from him. Southey, in a note which I had from him last night, says, "It was in the year 1801 that I last left Lisbon; and time and revolution have cut down and broken up and scattered the society in which I lived and with which I was connected. I can, however, procure letters for Mr. Leeves, which shall be franked to him from London as soon as you let me know where they are to be ad-

dressed. I should fear that he may wait long at the 'storm-vexed Bermudas' before he finds a passage to Lisbon. The voyage, however, is his best chance." Of course I shall write to Southey this night desiring him to have them sent to you. Through the family at Gale House I have applied also to Mr. Koster of Liverpool; he was one of the best English residents of Lisbon. Whatever letters he may send are expected at Ambleside to-night or to-morrow night. By the first post after their arrival (we have only four in a week) I will forward them to Southey. At all events, I will write again by next Monday morning's post (the first after the one I now write by), and enclose a letter to the ambassador at Constantinople which will be very useful, if he should go so far; and as he means to sail about from place to place, most probably he will. I felt great concern on hearing of his illness, and hope heartily that he may find benefit from his voyages. Kindly assure him of my most friendly remembrance and best wishes for his speedy re-establishment.

I have now, with sadness of heart, to inform you that dear, little Thomas Wordsworth died of the measles on Tuesday the 1st of last month. He was seized with them the Thursday before, and had none but favourable symptoms until about 11 o'clock on the Tuesday morning; after which he grew rapidly worse, and died about five in the evening. I was met at Liverpool, on my road home, by a letter from Wordsworth written the same night to inform me of this event, in which he writes:—

"His sufferings were short, and I think not severe. Pray come to us as soon as you can. My sister is not at home. Mrs. W. bears her loss with striking fortitude, and Miss Hutchison is as well as can be expected. My sister will be here to-morrow.

Most tenderly and lovingly, with heavy sorrow for you, my dear friend, I remain yours, W. Wordsworth."

Unfortunately I did not receive this letter till the very night of his funeral, which (though I loved him tenderly, dear child!) I was thus unable to attend.

The Mr. Leeves referred above to was a clergyman, chaplain to the embassy at Constantinople, a son

of the Rector of Wrington in the Mendip Hills, well-known as the composer of the modern air to "Auld Robin Gray."

In Charles Lloyd, as has been said, De Quincey found, perhaps, more of an answering quality in the deeper veins of sentiment than in any other of his Grasmere friends. Indeed, the impression gathered from De Quincey's picture of Lloyd gives a far higher idea of him than we had gathered from his poems, though that, we need not say, was high. De Quincey himself expressly says, "Lloyd had other and higher accomplishments of intellect than he showed in his verses." Lloyd had been reared a Quaker, after a strict fashion even for a Quaker; and the repression in youth of the natural gaiety and fervour of his nature had reacted injuriously, and had precipitated a tendency to lunacy, intensified by specific disease. It was a painful contest, a daily anxious watching and terror of certain tokens; but that the clouded life was beautiful and silver-streaked De Quincey bears good witness.

"On his own account," says De Quincey, "and for his personal qualities, he was worthy of a separate notice in any biography, however sparing in its digressions; but, viewed in reference to his fortunes, among the most interesting men I have known. Never do I reflect upon his hard fate, and the bitter though mysterious persecution of body which pursued him, dogged him, and thickened as life advanced, but I feel gratitude to Heaven for my own exemption from suffering in that particular form; and in the midst of afflictions, of which two or three have been most hard to bear, because not unmingled with pangs

of remorse for the share which I myself had in causing them—still, by comparison with the lot of Charles Lloyd, I acknowledge my own to have been happy and serene."

"The splendour of his talk," he proceeds, "was quite hidden from himself, and unperceived amidst the effort of mind, and oftentime severe struggles, in attempting to do himself justice, both as respected the thoughts and the difficult task of clothing them in adequate words; he was as free from vanity, or even from complacency in reviewing what he had effected, as it is possible for a human creature to be. He thought, indeed, slightly of his own powers, and, which was even a stronger barrier against vanity, his displays in this kind were always in proportion to his own unhappiness; for unhappiness it was, and the restlessness of internal irritation, that chiefly drove him to exertion of his intellect; else, and when free from this sort of excitement, he tended to the quiescent state of a listener, for he thought everybody better than himself. And so he walked on with an ever-present sense of the anguish that might at any moment overwhelm him." He at last fell under the stroke; and one of the most melting passages we have ever read is the account we have of his rushing into De Quincey's cottage, when he had escaped from his confinement. De Quincey's casuistic discussion with himself as to his duty in the matter raises a smile whilst the eyes are yet moist.

In August 1813, we find him writing to the Wordsworths:—

On Sunday last one of my sisters received a letter from my brother Richard, dated London. I believe you know that he is as

restless as the sea; so you may guess our astonishment on learning that he had only just left Westmoreland. . . In the way of news from Grasmere or its neighbourhood, his letter communicated nothing, except a very short and indistinct mention of Mr. Lloyd's illness in July: this gave us all great concern; but we collect, from the wording of it, that he had recovered before my brother left the North. If Grasmere can be considered a change of scene to Mr. Lloyd, I trust that you will not scruple to make use of my house; even if I come as early as I talk of, there is room (you know) for us all.

The other night Mrs. Hannah More returned from a *progress* among her people in Cambridge, Huntingdonshire, and different parts of England, and (if you think *that* any honour), made very minute inquiry respecting Mr. Lloyd's pursuits, habits, and tastes. She told me that she had met the senior Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd at Mr. Galton's, I think, and had had a good deal of conversation with them.

I have been twice in London since I saw you. On my last visit I saw a little of Coleridge; but during the latter part of my stay he would see nobody, not even Mrs. Morgan or her sister. He fancied that he had a fit of the gout coming on; and one day Mrs. Morgan told me that he had flung a note from the top of the stairs, to this effect, that the gout had already mounted to his stomach, and, if he were at all disturbed or agitated, would speedily attack the brain. It happened, however, on a night after this, when I had staid till past one o'clock with the two ladies, that they perceived a body of smoke turning the corner from Oxford Street into Berners Street, accompanied with a strong smell of burning. Coleridge was dressed and reading in his room; and on Mrs. Morgan knocking at his door, he instantly came out and tripped downstairs with her as lightly as ever.

Charles Lloyd died some years later in Paris, his mental faculties under a cloud.*

The following is the last we hear from De Quincey of a bright genius, a noble character, sacrificed so far to harsh traditions working hand in hand with morbid in-

* See Macready's "Reminiscences," vol. i. pp. 164-66.

heritance, and issuing in permanent gloom, depression, and final bewilderment and confusion of the intellectual faculties:—

"Charles Lloyd never returned to Brathay, after he had once been removed from it, and the removal of his family soon followed. Mrs. Lloyd, indeed, returned at intervals from France to England, upon business connected with the interests of her family; and during one of these fugitive visits she came to the Lakes, where she selected Grasmere for her residence; so that I had opportunities of seeing her every day for the space of several weeks. Otherwise, I never again saw any of the family, except one son, an interesting young man, who sought most meritoriously, by bursting asunder the heavy yoke of constitutional inactivity, to extract a balm for his own besetting melancholy, from a constant series of exertions in which he had forced himself to engage, for promoting education or religious knowledge among his poorer neighbours. But often and often, in years after all was gone, I have passed old Brathay, or have gone over purposely after dark, about the time when, for many a year, I used to go over to spend the evening; and, seating myself on a stone by the side of the mountain river Brathay, have stayed for hours listening to the same sound, to which so often Charles Lloyd and I used to hearken together with profound emotion and awe,—the sound of pealing anthems, as if streaming from the open portals of some illimitable cathedral; for such a sound does actually arise, in many states of the weather, from the peculiar action of the river Brathay upon its rocky bed; and many times I have heard it, of a quiet night, when

no stranger could have been persuaded to believe it other than the sound of choral chanting—distant, solemn, saintly. Its meaning and expression were, in these earlier years, uncertain and general; not more pointed or determinate in the direction which it impressed upon one's feelings than the light of setting suns; and sweeping, in fact, the whole harp of pensive sensibilities rather than striking the chord of any one specific sentiment. But since the ruin or dispersion of that household, after the smoke had ceased to ascend from their hearth, or the garden walks to re-echo their voices, oftentimes, when lying by the river side, I have listened to the same aerial, saintly sound, whilst looking back to that night, long hidden in the forest of receding years, when Charles and Sophia Lloyd, now lying in foreign graves, first dawned upon me, coming suddenly out of rain and darkness; then young, rich, happy, full of hope, belted with young children (of whom also most are long dead), and standing apparently on the verge of a labyrinth of golden hours. Musing on the night in November 1807, and then upon the wreck that had been wrought by a space of fifteen years, I would say to myself sometimes, and seem to hear it in the songs of this watery cathedral:—Put not your trust in any fabric of happiness that has its root in man or the children of men. Sometimes even I was tempted to discover, in the same music, a sound such as this:—Love nothing, love nobody, for thereby comes a killing curse in the rear. But sometimes, also, very early on a summer morning, when the dawn was barely beginning to break, all things locked in sleep, and only some uneasy murmur or cock-crow in the faint

distance, giving a hint of resurrection for earth and her generations, I have heard, in that same chanting of the little mountain river, a more solemn if a less agitated admonition—a requiem over departed happiness, and a protestation against the thought that so many excellent creatures, but a little lower than the angels, whom I have seen only to love in this life—so many of the good, the brave, the beautiful, the wise—can have appeared for no higher purpose or prospect than simply to point a moral, to cause a little joy and many tears, a few perishing moons of happiness and years of vain regret. No! that the destiny of man is more in correspondence with the grandeur of his endowments, and that our own mysterious tendencies are written hieroglyphically in the vicissitudes of day and night, of winter and summer, and throughout the great alphabet of Nature. But on that theme—Beware, reader! Listen to no *intellectual* argument. One argument there is of philosophic value: an argument drawn from the moral nature of man—an argument of Immanuel Kant's—The rest are dust and ashes."

With Southey, owing to his excessive devotion to work, his somewhat stiff and uncongenial manners, De Quincey did not form so intimate a friendship as with these others. Their earliest intercourse was enough, however, to give Southey a very elevated idea of De Quincey's powers. In the end of 1810 we find him thus writing to Mr. Richman:—"Mathetes is not De Quincey, but a Mr. Wilson,—De Quincey is a singular man, but better informed than any person almost that I ever met at his age."

We find De Quincey, many years after this, re-

cording his relations with Southey; in writing of his first settlement in the Lakes in 1808–9:—"Though, on various accounts, my intercourse with him was at no time very strict, partly from the very uncongenial constitution of my own mind, and the different direction of my studies, partly from my reluctance to levy a tax on time so precious and so fully employed, I was yet on such terms for the next ten or eleven years that I might, in a qualified sense, call myself his friend."

Nature and human society alike had thus cast spells over him and linked him by a kind of fascination to the Valleys. He himself at one place proudly confesses:—

"The very names of the ancient hills—Fairfield, Seat Sandal, Helvellyn, Blencathra, Glaramara; the names of the sequestered glens, such as—Borrowdale, Martindale, Mardale, Wasdale, and Ennerdale; but, above all, the shy pastoral recesses, not garishly in the world's eye, like Windermere or Derwentwater, but lurking half unknown to the traveller of that day — Grasmere, for instance, the lovely abode of the poet himself, solitary, and yet sowed, as it were, with a thin diffusion of humble dwellings—here a scattering, and there a clustering, as in the starry heavens—sufficient to afford, at every turn and angle, human remembrances and memorials of time-honoured affections, or of passions (as the 'Churchyard amongst the Mountains' will amply demonstrate), not wanting even in scenic or tragic interest — these were so many local spells to me, equally poetic and elevating with the Miltonic names of Valdarno and Vallombrosa."

Owing to the failure of one of the houses of business in which a large portion of De Quincey's money had been invested, he was suddenly deprived of one of his sources of income, which accounts for the tenor of the following letter from his uncle, Colonel Penson, about this time :—

My Dear Sir,—I have heard that your affairs are not prosperous, though of the nature or extent of your misfortunes I have no information. Yet as it has pleased God to bless me beyond either hope or expectation since I left England, I feel that in requesting your acceptance of the enclosed I am not violating the spirit of the command you gave me when last I heard from you, either in 1806 or 1807; for I then was in truth as poor as need be, but the amendment of my affairs makes an entire change in all the circumstances and relations of life. Mr. Crittenden has sent the first of this bill, and I shall send the triplicate by some other conveyance.

All is peace and still life here. Communication is only from the West; and our last accounts from Spain are very unpromising. Make my kind affections to all at Westhay, and believe me, my dear sir, yours most affectionately,

Thos. Penson.

Futtyghur, near Furrackabad, 16*th July* 1813.

In the years 1813–14, Wilson was chiefly in Edinburgh in connection with his profession at the bar; but every available holiday he spent at Elleray, sometimes descending on his neighbours like a surprise. The footing on which he and De Quincey continued to stand was certainly of the most brotherly and unceremonious kind. For example, on a certain Saturday in the autumn of 1814, we find Wilson dining with William Curwen, and then walking to De Quincey's, which he reaches at half-past one on the Sunday morning.

"De Quincey was at the *Nab*," he says, "and

when he returned about three o'clock, found me asleep in his bed." And, we can well believe that De Quincey did not a whit overstep the fact, when, in some letters written to a young American friend, he said:—

"I repeat, that my interest, as I flatter myself, would have opened the gates of Elleray to you even at midnight; for I am so old a friend of Mr. Wilson that I take a pride in supposing myself the oldest; and, barring relations by blood, arrogate the rights of dean in the chapter of his associates; or at least I know of but one person whose title can probably date earlier than mine. About this very month when I am writing, I have known Professor Wilson for a cycle of twenty years and more, which is just half of his life—and also half of mine; for we are almost *ad apicem* of the same age,—Wilson being born in May, and I in August, of the same memorable year."

During those earlier years at Grasmere, he paid visits to friends in Bristol, in Somersetshire, and in London. Mrs. Hannah More, who, as we have seen, was an intimate friend of his mother, and had been drawn into a somewhat close intimacy with her by similarity of tastes and dogmatic beliefs, was always visited by De Quincey when he was staying with his mother at her house, Westhay, or with his mother's friends in that district.

At Hannah More's, he tells us, he met Mrs. Siddons in 1814, and he thus sets down his impressions of these two famous women:—

"Mrs. Siddons obviously thought Mrs. Hannah More a person who differed from the world chiefly by applying a greater energy, and sincerity, and zeal to a

system of religious truth equally known to all. Repentance, for instance—all people hold that to be a duty; and Mrs. Hannah More differed from them only by holding it to be a duty of all hours, a duty for youth not less than for age. But how much would she have been shocked to hear that Mrs. Hannah More held all repentance, however indispensable, yet in itself, and though followed by the sincerest efforts at reformation of life, to be utterly unavailing as any operative part of the means by which man gains acceptance with God. To rely upon repentance, or upon anything that man can do for himself, that Mrs. Hannah More considered as the mortal taint, as the ωρωτον Ψευδος in the worldly theories of the Christian scheme; and I have heard the two ladies—Mrs. Hannah More and Mrs. Siddons, I mean—talking by the hour together, as completely at cross-purposes as it is possible to imagine. Everything, in fact, of what was special in the creed adopted by Mrs. Hannah More, by Wilberforce, and many others known as evangelical Christians, is always capable, in lax conversation, of being translated into a vague general sense, which completely obscures the true limitations of the meaning. Mrs. Hannah More, however, was too polished a woman to allow of any sectarian movement being impressed upon the conversation; consequently, she soon directed it to literature, upon which Mrs. Siddons was very amusing, from her recollections of Dr. Johnson, whose fine-turned compliment to herself (so much in the spirit of those unique compliments addressed to eminent people by Louis XIV.) had for ever planted the doctor's memory in her heart. She spoke also of Garrick and Mrs.

Garrick; but not, I think, with so much respect and affection as Mrs. Hannah More, who had in her youthful days received the most friendly attentions from both, though coming forward at that time in no higher character than as the author of Percy, the most insipid of tragedies. Mrs. Siddons was prevailed on to read passages from both Shakespeare and Milton. The dramatic readings were delightful; in fact, they were almost stage rehearsals, accompanied with appropriate gesticulation. . . . I shall always regard my recollections of Mrs. Siddons as those in which chiefly I have an advantage over the coming generation; nay, perhaps over all generations; for many centuries may revolve without producing such another transcendent creature."

In February 1814, we find Wordsworth writing to De Quincey during one of his visits to Somersetshire, consulting him about an added stanza in "Laodamia," which now appears in the poem, beginning

"While tears were thy best pastime day and night,"

and requesting him to be more detailed in the expression of his opinion on certain poems and on the Preface than he had been,—his opinions, as it would appear, having been studiously general about the said Preface, and a request made for copies of the earlier draft of it. This leads Wordsworth to say, that he wished De Quincey had mentioned *why* he had desired the *rough* copies of the Preface to be kept, as the request had led him to apprehend that something therein might have appeared to be better or more clearly expressed than in the after-draught; adding, "I should have been glad to receive suggestions accordingly."

CHAPTER IX.

EDINBURGH.

WILSON, owing to the loss of his fortune through an uncle, had found it necessary to quit Elleray, and to betake himself seriously tot he practice of his profession at the Scottish bar. He made his mother's house in Edinburgh his home, and gathered round him, as was the necessity and the delight of his sociable nature, a "band of choice spirits." The literary society of Edinburgh in 1815 did not need to seek shelter under the great traditions left by its illustrious predecessors. Hume, Lord Kames, Fergusson, and Dugald Stewart had passed away, leaving a kind of radiant track behind them, out of which Jeffrey and Scott had already emerged, to assert an independent and individual light. But lesser clusters were forming, and that of which John Wilson now became the acknowledged centre was destined to grow broader in importance, and do something to sustain the intellectual credit of the "Modern Athens." We can well imagine that here the talk was of the wittiest and most brilliant, passing now and then into boisterous fun, liveliest repartee, and

catching itself up again with subdued seriousness as some grave problem presented itself, or some new work of mark was brought upon the *tapis*. Wilson, genial, overflowing, yielding easily to the demand of the moment, would hold his own, as a good host ought. Anecdotes and stories, derived from contact with gypsies and others during those early escapades of his, would doubtless bear their part; but widely read in poetry and *belles lettres* as he was, and with a retentive, if somewhat inexact memory, he could mount the most refined pinnacles of criticism. Then there was Hamilton, darkly metaphysical, omnivorous of books; R. P. Gillies, rich with the spoils of extensive travel, full of the recent chit-chat of the higher circles, and proud of his correspondence with eminent persons—a sort of Scottish Crabb Robinson; Lockhart, cynical, reserved, and stately, but here, amongst congenial spirits, gratefully unbending; and William Allan—yet to be Sir William—staid, conciliatory, a grand listener, yet sometimes unostentatiously turning the conversation to the field in which he was specially interested. It was into this society that De Quincey, in the end of 1814, came like a man dropped from the moon. Wilson, writing to Edinburgh under date October 31, 1814, says: "De Quincey will accompany me to Scotland; but I will write about his rooms in a day or two." They did not at first know well what to make of this man with the boyish figure and the gentle voice, who, with quiet, unassuming deliverance, speedily asserted a kind of right to say the final word, and who soon became a referee in knotty points of philosophy or scholarship—even Hamilton assenting. He was—at

any rate for a time—a puzzle, a paradox, a source of bewilderment, and they could not have done talking about him. He became a kind of literary lion, and was persecuted with invitations to dine out here, there, everywhere. All felt that a new influence was at work in their midst, and they enjoyed it. This new comer, who could cap Hamilton's most recondite quotations from Plato and Plotinus, from Kant or Richter, or rectify on the spur of the moment the least lapse in a line cited from Euripides or Pindar, was worthy of study and of deference, both of which were so loyally yielded him that De Quincey ever afterwards felt a love for Edinburgh, as for a second *alma mater*. His odd habits, too, had their own attraction, and surrounded him with something of mystic glamour. He was then in that stage of opium-eating which may be regarded as a swift advance to the climax; but as yet, at all events, his constitution and mental faculties seemed to be strengthened instead of impaired by it. He was still in the stage of simple, gratified energies; and his talk, on emerging from his slumber, all agree was *sui generis*. Wilson would invite night-parties, we are told, so that De Quincey, who was at the best in the early-hours, might be seen and heard to full advantage.

De Quincey himself thus tells of the company, of which he cherished grateful recollections to the end :—

"The original nucleus had been John Wilson (*i.e.*, *the* Wilson) and his brothers, amongst whom the naturalist (James Wilson) was known to me first, and subsequently Sir William Hamilton. Next,

and after the war had finally reached its consummation in Waterloo—a *peripeteia* as perfect and dramatic as ever was exhibited on the stage of Athens—others at intervals gladdened our festive company, amongst whom, as the most memorable, I ought to mention Colonel Mitchell, the biographer of Wallenstein, so advantageously known by his bold and original views upon strategies, upon the efficacy of the bayonet, and upon the critical interpretation of some chapters in martial history; Captain Thomas Hamilton, the brother of Sir William, an accomplished man, latterly known among us by the name of Cyril Thornton, from the title of his novel; Sir William Allan, the distinguished artist, afterwards President of the Royal Scottish Academy; and lastly, Mr. R. P. Gillies, the advocate, whose name I repeat with a sigh of inexpressible sadness, such as belongs of right to some splendid Timon of Athens, so often as, on the one hand, I revivify to my mind his gay saloons, resonant with music and festive laughter,—the abode for years of a munificent hospitality, which Wordsworth characterises as 'all but princely,'—and, on the other hand, shudder at the mighty shadows of calamity, of sorrow, of malice, of detraction, that have for thirty years stalked after his retreating splendour, and long since have swallowed up the very memory of his pretensions from the children of this generation."

In his "Reminiscences of a Literary Veteran"—a work of singular interest, alike on account of its anecdotes of distinguished personages and the glimpses it gives us into an original and penetrating mind—a work which certainly deserves to be raised

out of the forgetfulness into which it has fallen, we find Mr. Gillies thus recording his impressions of De Quincey :—

"During the winter of 1814-15, Mr. de Quincey accompanied his friend, the author of the "Isle of Palms," from Westmoreland to Edinburgh. I had then an opportunity of observing the literary character in an entirely new phase, for up to that time, De Quincey, though he had spent long years in assiduous study, and by his friends was regarded as a powerful author, had not, so far as I know, published a single line. He seemed, indeed, to live for the sake of the labour alone, and to fling overboard all considerations either of the *palma* or *pecunia*. His various literary compositions, written in his exemplary hand (the best I ever saw, except Southey's), on little scraps of paper, must have reached to a great extent, but in his own estimation they were by no means 'ready for the press;' like an ever cautious general, he withheld his fire, and remained '*multa et pulchra menans*.' Not only for this reason, but in other respects, Mr. de Quincey seemed to me to bring out the literary character in a new light. Very decisively he realised my plan of moving in a separate world (having no doubt realities of its own); moreover, he neither spoke nor acted in the everyday world like any one else, for which, of course, I greatly honoured him. He was then in the habit of taking opium daily as an article of food, and the drug, though used for years, had scarcely begun to tell on his constitution, by those effects, which, sooner or later, overtake every one of its persevering votaries; and which, when they will appear, make quick work

in demolishing together the man physical and the man intellectual; the latter being reduced to the pitiable plight of a musician who essays to play by means of a harp unstrung and broken. But in his case, it had not worked any such evils as yet, and in after years, though not without a long and tough battle, Mr. de Quincey succeeded in vanquishing the narcotic devil.

"His voice was extraordinary: it came as if from dream-land; but it was the most musical and impressive of voices. In convivial life, what then seemed to me the most remarkable trait of De Quincey's character, was the power he possessed of easily changing the tone of ordinary thought and conversation into that of his own dream-land, till his auditors, with wonder, found themselves moving pleasantly along with him in a sphere of which they might have heard and read, perhaps, but which had ever appeared to them inaccessible and far, far away! Seeing that he was always good-natured and social, he could take part, at commencement, in any sort of tattle or twaddle. The talk might be of 'beeves,' and he could grapple with them, if expected to do so, but his musical cadences were not in keeping with such work, and in a few minutes (not without some strictly logical sequence), he could escape at will from the beeves to butterflies, and thence to the soul's immortality, to Plato, and Kant, and Schelling, and Fichte, to Milton's early years and Shakespeare's sonnets, to Wordsworth and Coleridge, to Homer and Æschylus, to St. Thomas of Aquin, St. Basil, and St. Chrysostom. But he by no means excluded them from real life, according to his own views of

that life, but would recount profound mysteries from his own experiences—visions that had come over him in his loneliest walks among the mountains, and passages within his own personal knowledge, illustrating, if not proving, the doctrines of dreams, of warnings, of second sight, and mesmerism. And whatever the subject might be, every one of his sentences (or of his chapters, I might say) was woven into the most perfect logical texture, and uttered in a tone of sustained melody.

"Such power and acquirements could not fail to excite wonder in Edinburgh. He had indeed studied 'all such books as are never read,' in that enlightened capital, and was the first friend I had ever met who could profess to have a command over the German language, and who consequently was able (*ex cathedra*), to corroborate my notions of the great stores that were contained therein. I flatter myself that he found our house not altogether uncongenial, as he was kind enough to visit there more frequently than in any other."

This visit to Edinburgh, which lasted for some months, can only be reckoned as an interesting interlude, claiming notice here in a special way, because no doubt the friendships and associations now formed had a powerful influence, and, later, determined De Quincey's course at what may be ranked as a turning-point in his life.

CHAPTER X.

GRASMERE, AND MARRIAGE.

IN April 1816, we find Wordsworth writing to R. P. Gillies: "Mr. de Quincey has taken a fit of solitude: I have scarcely seen him since Mr. Wilson left us." Taking this in connection with some other significant circumstances, we can infer that the presence of Wilson had become a kind of necessary uniting medium between Wordsworth and De Quincey, and that now, his presence being withdrawn, the two had shown some tendency to fall coldly apart from each other. We can easily imagine that the consciousness of this would be depressing to De Quincey. But other and more urgent interests had arisen to modify in some measure such painful feelings simply by the powerful pre-occupations of fear and hope. De Quincey has himself told us in his "Confessions" how—though he had intermittently used opium during the eight years between 1804 and 1812—he had felt no ill effects from it. "Hitherto," he says, "I have been only a dilettante eater of opium; eight years' practice even, with the single precaution of allowing

sufficient intervals between every indulgence, has not been sufficient to make opium necessary to me as an article of daily diet." But in 1813 the irritation in the stomach which had arisen as one of the effects of those months of starvation in London, now recurred with such intensity, that he was led, for mitigation, greatly to increase the quantity taken. His dose had risen to 340 grains of opium, or 8000 drops of laudanum per day—a formidable figure, though we learn that it is only a little more than half what Coleridge was taking about the same time. He resolved to conquer the habit, and was fortified by a new inducement. He was engaged to be married. Accordingly, as detailed in the "Confessions," he reduced his daily dose from 340 grains to 40. Instantaneously, and as if by magic, he says, the cloud of profoundest melancholy, which had rested on his brain, drew off: once again he was happy; his brain performed its functions as healthily as ever; he read Kant and understood him; and feelings of pleasure expanded themselves around him. But he had been too sanguine; not yet realising fully the insidious and powerful hold such a drug obtains, nor laying weight enough on the necessity for a carefully graduated reduction, and the strictest attention to exercise, so as to prevent strong reactions, which are more dangerous than aught else. This plan was now more systematically applied, and with such appearance of success as to justify him in assuming the responsibilities of marriage in the end of 1816. Mrs. Baird Smith has kindly supplied the following account of her mother:—

"Mrs de Quincey, whose maiden name was Mar-

garet Simpson, was the daughter of a Westmoreland 'statesman,'—that is, if I understand rightly, a farmer whose family had farmed the same land for generations; this land, as I believe, being held by some special service. Her father was a man of a reserved, massive, upright character, who in his long days, and sometimes nights, of solitary work, had made his own a good deal of the best literature of the country, as some of his grandchildren found long after, while trying to lighten the sleepless nights of his old age, when a chance word would loose his reserve, and this silent man would find it most easy to express himself by words from the Bible, Milton, Shakespeare, Pope's 'Homer,' and sometimes a whole 'Spectator,' humorous or grave, as the exciting subject might have been, and all in the homely, kindly Westmoreland dialect, which in no way spoiled the recitation to our ears. From him, no doubt, my mother inherited intellectual tastes; but she was married so early—when she was only eighteen—that my father himself probably helped to guide her to the large interests which make his few touching references to her fall so far short of all she was to him by her sympathy with his many-sided mind. Delicate health and family cares made her early withdraw from society, but she seems to have had a powerful fascination for the few friends she admitted to intimacy, from an old charwoman who used to threaten us, as though it were guilt on our part, 'Ye'll ne'er be the gallant woman ye're mither was,' to a friend who had seen society in all the principal cities of Europe, and who, with no reason for exaggeration, has told us he had never

seen a more gracious or a more beautiful lady than our mother."

Though De Quincey speaks prior to 1813 of years "set, as it were, and insulated in the gloom and cloudy melancholy of opium," he can still regard himself as having been on the whole a happy man till the middle of the year 1817. That and the succeeding year 1818 find him overmastered by the enemy, shut as into a cave of Trophonius. The Circean spell seemed to have been laid upon him more effectually than ever. He describes these years as unfolding an Iliad of woes in the "Pains of Opium." His faculties were as though bound up in chains of frost. He shrunk from mathematics and intellectual philosophy with a sense of infantile feebleness. He could not read what demanded any effort and sustained thought. A great philosophical work which he had begun, and which was to be called after Spinoza's "De Emendatione Humani Intellectûs," was helplessly abandoned. He seldom could prevail on himself to write a letter; an answer of a few words to any he received was all that he could accomplish, and often not that until the letters had lain for weeks or even months on his table. In the midst of this grievous prostration his wife read to him poetry and other things, and in the beginning of 1819 a friend sent from Edinburgh a copy of Ricardo's book on Political Economy, which acted like a charm. Once more he found he could read. "Recurring to my own prophetic anticipation of the advent of some legislator for this science, I said, before I had finished the first chapter, 'Thou art the man!' Wonder and curiosity

were emotions that had long been dead in me. Yet I wondered once more; I wondered at myself that I could once more be stimulated to the effort of reading; and much more I wondered at the book." But it did more; it roused him to active effort—"to write, or, at least, to dictate what M. wrote for me. It seemed to me that some important truths had escaped even 'the inevitable eye' of Mr. Ricardo; and as these were for the most part of such a nature that I could express or illustrate them more briefly and elegantly by algebraic symbols than in the usual clumsy and loitering diction of economists, the whole would not have filled a pocket-book; and being so brief, with M. for my amanuensis, even at this time, incapable as I was of all general exertion, I drew up my 'Prolegomena of all Future Systems of Political Economy.'"

This exertion, however, was but a temporary flash. Though a part of the work was actually printed, it had to be laid aside, as once more the old habit prevailed, and the gloomy shadows again gathered round. Now came the terror and the strife—the sense of sinking as if into unmeasured depths, under the weight of twenty Atlantics; the darkness being painted with a never-ceasing procession of awful pictures, in which the dreams and the agonies of youth were mixed in inextricable confusion with stories woven out of classic or oriental reminiscence. "When I lay in bed, vast processions passed along in mournful pomp; friezes of never-ending stories, that to my feelings were as sad and solemn as if they were drawn from the times before Œdipus or Priam—before Tyre—before Memphis." Sleep and

waking became alike, in the prevailing sense of sunless gloom, and unsounded abysses, out of which there seemed no hope of rising; while space and time alike became boundless, infinite.

In an unpublished writing, we read of this period: —"At length I grew afraid to sleep; and I shrunk from it as from the most savage tortures. Often I fought with my own drowsiness, and kept it aloof by sitting up the whole night and following day. Sometimes I lay down only in the daytime, and sought to charm away the phantoms by requesting my family to sit round me and to talk, hoping thus to draw an influence from what externally affected me into my internal world of shadows; but, far from that, I infected and stained, as it were, the whole of my waking experience with the feelings derived from sleep. I seemed indeed to live, and to converse even, when awake, with my visionary companions much more than with the realities of life. 'Oh, what do you see, dear? what is it that you see?' was the constant exclamation of M. by which I was awakened as soon as I had fallen asleep (though to me it seemed as if I had slept for years). My groans had, it seems, awakened her; and, from her account, they had commenced immediately on my falling asleep."

Then, as he tells us in the "Confessions," "I sometimes seemed to have lived for seventy or a hundred years in one night; nay, sometimes had feelings representative of a millennium passed in that time. . . . In the earlier stages of my malady, the splendours of my dreams were chiefly architectural; and I beheld such pomps of cities and palaces as were never

yet beheld by the waking eye, unless in the clouds. . . . To my architecture succeeded dreams of lakes and silvery expanses of water. But by and by the waters changed their character—from translucent lakes, shining like mirrors, they now became seas and oceans. And now came a tremendous change, which unfolding itself slowly, like a scroll, through many months, promised an abiding torment; and, in fact, it never left me until the winding up of my case. Hitherto the human face had mixed often in my dreams, but not despotically, nor with any special power of tormenting. But now that which I have called the tyranny of the human face, began to unfold itself. Perhaps some part of my London life might be answerable for this. Be that as it may, now it was that upon the rocking waters of the ocean the human face began to appear: the sea seemed to be paved with innumerable faces, upturned to the heavens; faces, imploring, wrathful, despairing, surged up by thousands, by myriads, by generations, by centuries: my agitation was infinite,—my mind tossed and surged with the ocean."

Hitherto the terrors had been solely those of the mind, but together with deepening oriental extravagance, there came the sense of physical horrors, inexpressible. Ugly birds, snakes, and crocodiles were now the main figures. "The cursed crocodile became to me the object of more horror than almost all the rest. I was compelled to live with him; and (as was always the case almost in my dreams) for centuries. I escaped sometimes, and found myself in Chinese houses, with cane tables, &c. All the feet of the tables, sofas, &c., soon became instinct with

life: the abominable head of the crocodile, with his leering eyes, looked out at me, multiplied into a thousand repetitions: and I stood loathing and fascinated. And so often did this hideous reptile haunt my dreams, that many times the very same dream was broken up in the very same way: I heard gentle voices speaking to me (I hear everything when I am sleeping); and instantly I awoke: it was broad noon; and my children were standing, hand in hand, at my bedside; come to show me their coloured shoes, or new frocks, or to let me see them dressed for going out. I protest that so awful was the transition from the damned crocodile, and the other unutterable monsters and abortions of my dreams, to the sight of innocent *human* natures and of infancy, that, in the mighty and sudden revulsion of mind, I wept, and could not forbear it, as I kissed their faces."

The countenances of those with whom he had been brought into terms of fellowship during the sad years of his wanderings—more especially that of Ann of Oxford Street—were mingled in the gloomy pageant, sometimes sad and sorrowful, sometimes as if patiently beseeching, but always passing away from him amid sighs and tears, and the sense of everlasting farewells.

Such is an indication of De Quincey's opium-dreams, which we forbear to indicate more in detail, as they are so well known, and lie so easily accessible in his "Confessions of an Opium-Eater" and "The Suspiria de Profundis." In the "Confessions," too, he tells, with a candour as remarkable as is the literary tact used in conveying it, how

he did, by a great effort, free himself from this utter domination of opium, asserting for himself such comparative freedom as enabled him to undertake and to do some measure of steady work. In this it is evident that we owe much to the unwearying devotion of his wife, and the unwavering faith she had in her husband's powers. She was a "woman of a steady mind, tender and deep in her excess of love," using, day by day, for the due support of her affection, patient good sense, admirable management, and uncomplaining readiness of service. With what fragrance of satisfied affection De Quincey has enshrined her in his records, making her knit together, like a mystic band of light, the two periods of his life marked by most transcendent sufferings, to relieve and soften both:—

"My novitiate in London had struck so deeply in my bodily constitution, that afterwards they shot up and flourished afresh, and grew into a noxious umbrage that has overshadowed and darkened my latter years. Yet these second assaults of suffering were met with a fortitude more confirmed, with the resources of a maturer intellect, and with alleviations from sympathising affection—how deep and tender!

"Thus, however, with whatsoever alleviations, years that were far asunder were bound together by subtle links of suffering derived from a common root. And herein I notice an instance of the short-sightedness of human desires, that oftentimes on moonlight nights, during my first mournful abode in London, my consolation was (if such it could be thought) to gaze from Oxford Street up every avenue in succession which pierces through the heart of Mary-le-bone

to the fields and the woods; and *that*, said I, travelling with my eyes up the long vistas which lay part in light and part in shade, '*that* is the road to the north, and therefore to ——; and if I had the wings of a dove, *that* way I would fly for comfort.' Thus I said and thus I wished, in my blindness; yet, *even in that very northern region it was, even in that very valley, nay, in that very house to which my erroneous wishes pointed*, that this second birth of my sufferings began; and that they again threatened to besiege the citadel of life and hope. There it was that for years I was persecuted by visions, as ugly and as ghastly phantoms as ever haunted the couch of an Orestes; and in this unhappier than he, that sleep, which comes to all as a respite and a restoration, and to him especially as a blessed balm for his wounded heart and his haunted brain, visited me as my bitterest scourge. Thus blind was I in my desires; yet, if a veil interposes between the dim-sightedness of man and his future calamities, the same veil hides from him their alleviations, and a grief which had not been feared is met by consolations which had not been hoped. I, therefore, who participated, as it were, in the troubles of Orestes (excepting only in his agitated conscience), participated no less in all his supports. My Eumenides, like his, were at my bed-feet, and stared in upon me through the curtains; but watching by my pillow, or defrauding herself of sleep to bear me company through the heavy watches of the night, sat my Electra: for thou, beloved M., dear companion of my later years, thou wast my Electra! and neither in nobility of mind nor in long-suffering affection,

wouldst permit that a Grecian sister should excel an English wife. For thou thoughtest not much to stoop to humble offices of kindness, and to servile ministrations of tenderest affection,—to wipe away for years the unwholesome dews upon the forehead, or to refresh the lips when parched and baked with fever; nor, even when thy own peaceful slumbers had by long sympathy become infected with the spectacle of my dread contest with phantoms and shadowy enemies, that oftentimes bade me 'sleep no more!'—not even then didst thou utter a complaint or any murmur, nor withdraw thy angelic smiles, nor shrink from thy service of love more than Electra did of old. For she, too, though she was a Grecian woman, and the daughter of the king of men, yet wept sometimes, and hid her face in her robe."

With the casuistry of love, he finds opportunities to celebrate the devotion of his wife in many relations. He acknowledges of the earlier period of his married life in Westmoreland:—"Without the aid of M., all records of bills paid, or *to be* paid, must have perished; and my whole domestic economy, whatever became of Political Economy, must have gone into irretrievable confusion." And again, when he has been led, by the phantasy of inviting a painter to reproduce the interior of his Grasmere cottage, with all its surroundings in these evil days —ruby opium-decanter and all—to refer to the personal appearance of his wife, he exclaims:—"But no, dear M., not even in jest let me insinuate that thy power to illuminate my cottage rests upon a tenure so perishable as mere personal beauty; or

that the witchcraft of angelic smiles lies within the empire of any earthly pencil."

Elsewhere he exclaims:—

"Oh! sense of mysterious pre-existence, by which, through years in which as yet a stranger to these valleys of Westmoreland, I viewed myself as a phantom-self—a second identity projected from my own consciousness, and already lived amongst them!—how was it, and by what prophetic instinct, that already I said to myself oftentimes, when chasing day-dreams along the pictures of these wild mountainous labyrinths, which as yet I had not traversed: Here, in some distant year, I shall be shaken with love, and then with stormiest grief? Whence was it that sudden revelations came to me, like the drawing up of a curtain, and closing again as rapidly, of scenes that made the future heaven of my life? And how was it that in thought I *was* and yet in reality was *not* a denizen, already, in 1803–4–5, of lakes and forest-lawns which I never saw till 1807? and that, by a prophetic instinct of the heart, I rehearsed and lived over, as it were, in vision those chapters of my life which have carried with them the weightiest burthen of joy and sorrow, and by the margin of those very lakes and hills with which I prefigured this connection?"

And he goes on to say:—

"But the years came—for I have lived too long, reader, in relation to many things; and the report of me would have been better, or more uniform at least had I died some twenty years ago—the years came in which circumstances made me an opium-eater: years through which a shadow as of sad

eclipse sate and rested upon my faculties; years through which I was careless of all but those who lived within *my* inner circle, within 'my heart of hearts;' years—ah, heavenly years!—through which I lived, beloved, *with* thee, *to* thee, *for* thee, *by* thee! Ah, happy, happy years! in which I was a mere foot-ball of reproach, but in which every wind and sounding hurricane of wrath or contempt flew by, like chasing enemies past some defying gate of adamant, and left me too blessed in thy smiles—angel of life!—to heed the curses or the mocking which sometimes I heard raving outside of our impregnable Eden. What any man said of me in those days, what he thought, did I ask? did I care? Then it was, or nearly then, that I ceased to see, ceased to hear of Southey; as much abstracted from all which concerned the world outside, and from the Southeys and even the Coleridges, as though I had lived with the darlings of my heart in the centre of Canadian forests, and all men else in the centre of Hindostan."

He had ceased to see, had ceased almost to hear of others who had been more closely knit to him by the claims of common sympathies, and of friendly and brotherly services.

It needs to be borne in mind, however, that, though these recollections are in no way necessarily or consciously falsified, they are coloured by the fancy and impression through which they are viewed; and it only needs to be said that in reality he was not for any lengthened period thus exiled from companionship or contact with the outer world.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WESTMORELAND GAZETTE.

IT is somewhat inconsistent with our impressions of De Quincey, as gathered from a survey of the later portions of his life, to think of him as an active newspaper editor,—writing his "leaders" from week to week, endeavouring to stir up or to maintain an interest in local topics by the manœuvre of a "Letter to the Editor," trying to deepen the thought of his readers by bits of lively dialogue, or combating with polished periods, and an undoubted air of partisanship, the "liberal" ideas that in those days were thought by many to be radical. So, nevertheless, it was; and his experiences of newspaper editorship furnish by no means unentertaining or insignificant passages in his career. For during his connection with a weekly newspaper his interest in the topics of everyday was deepened and directed; his knowledge of history, the stores of fact and reference with which his memory was charged, were now strengthened by being regularly drawn upon; and a certain ease and readiness of expression cultivated, which no doubt afterwards materially aided

him in his struggles in London. We find him thus, towards the end of 1819, writing to his uncle, Colonel Penson, explanatory of his condition, monetary and otherwise, in view of accepting the allowance or the aid which, as we have seen, had been frequently tendered and declined before:—

In the course of the late contest for this county, those gentlemen who are friends to the constitution and establishments of this country found it necessary to establish a newspaper at the principal town in the county (Kendal), to oppose the infamous levelling doctrines diffused by Mr. Brougham and the old newspaper established seven or eight years ago (the "Kendal Chronicle"). An editor was procured from London; but he disgusted them in every way, and the principal gentlemen of the county then addressed an application to me, proposing that I should take the editorship: £160 a year was offered, but it was necessary to reside in Kendal. This I would have done, but my wife's illness, and an utter impossibility of raising the money for removing in the time prescribed (viz., between the 9th and 16th of July), obliged me at first with great pain of mind to decline it; but they then made a second application, offering that a clerk of the press should be hired to take those duties (in relation to advertisements, &c.) which must be performed by some one on the spot, and that I should pay him out of the £160, and receive the difference myself. This I accepted. The clerk was hired from a newspaper office in Manchester. He had previously £85 per annum, and he would not give up a certainty for less than two guineas a week; this deducted £109, 4s. from my £160, and left therefore but £50, 16s. per annum. However, the proprietors made it up to a guinea a week, and I have, therefore, a guinea a week *certain* for at least four years to come; and this I can retain at any distance; for though I now make up the paper and select and revise all the component articles, yet this labour is no part of my duties, but I have volunteered that part by way of raising the character and extending the sale of the paper; but my proper duty is simply to write a political essay on some subject of my own choosing, and this I can do at any distance. By the way, I have ordered the people in the office to send you the

paper regularly from about 18th July last, and if it has missed you in any week, I beg you to mention it. As editor, I can send it you gratis.

2. "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine" allows me to write as much as will produce 60 guineas a year. For the late months, I have had my time too much occupied with the newspaper to be at liberty for any labour in that work, and have been too ill almost to manage the newspaper. However, I have compelled myself to work so much, that the circulation of the paper is now much increased.

3. The "Quarterly Review" has allowed me to write what has yielded 120 guineas a year. Mr. Murray, the publisher, sent me a work for reviewal four months ago (the entire works of Schiller in 26 vols.), and it is still lying here, I am sorry to say, untouched; for the same reasons as I assigned in the last case, I have not yet been able to touch it.

These three sources will produce 232 guineas (or £243, 12s.) per annum. This, added to my warehouse rent, will be £260.

If you feel disposed to assist me, it would enable you to assist me much more readily by allowing me to draw a bill upon you at two months after date. This would answer my purpose, and would defer the time by so much at which the money would need to be raised, in whatever way it is raised. I need not repeat that your security would be amply sufficient to raise £500; say £150 now, and the other £350 in six or eight months hence, when I should be able to remove to London and to follow the law.

This assistance would re-establish me for life. I do not doubt your willingness to assist me, if possible. In 1810, you pressed me to accept an allowance, and have often pressed me since, and this I have declined now for nine years running.

De Quincey, we should remark, was connected with the "Gazette" from its start in 1818, but only began to edit it in the summer of 1819. He had full confidence that the aid asked from Colonel Penson would be readily given, as afterwards it was, and he threw himself into the business of editing with a dash and enthusiasm which astonish us.

His editorial work has a value for us in this also, as bearing on his second comparative escape from opium. There can be no doubt that the occupation of the mind, and the active interests which called for more exercise and movement than might else have been persevered in, were powerful aids. In not a few of his compositions, particularly his "Letters to the Editor," there was certainly not a little fun and fire. He kept a keen eye on the correspondence sent to the editor, and made it a point to deal with anything of importance that arose. For example, here is a portion of his reply to a "Plain Man," who seems to have been inclined to view rather lightly accusations made against Brougham for discourtesy and rudeness towards opponents :—

We shall request the public to observe what is the way of measuring independence adopted and acknowledged by a "Plain Man" amongst the Blues. Mr. Brougham in the supposed acts of mutiny against the body of Opposition is pronounced to have conducted himself "independently," &c. What, then, were the demands of Mr. Ponsonby which it is so honourable to Mr. Brougham and so characteristic of his "*enlightened mind*" that he disobeyed? Were they demands that he should sacrifice any principle, that he should forego any right, that he should compromise any duty? No; the speeches which he delivered and the votes which he gave (all of them servile to the views of his party), are so many vouchers that they were not. What were Mr. Ponsonby's demands as represented in the mock trial which is the ground of the "Plain Man's" complaint? Nothing more than the customary courtesies which have been immemorially practised towards the leader of the Opposition party, and which are indeed indispensable for the purpose of combining the efforts of any Parliamentary party in the pursuit of common ends? Mr. Brougham was to give notice to Mr. Ponsonby of any motions he desired to bring forward; he was not to insist upon his right of priority in any accidental collision between himself and Mr. P., as he would have done with another mem-

ber, &c., &c. Is it possible to conceive a more thoroughly ignoble and grovelling nature than that which would cloath with the honourable attributes of independence Mr. Brougham's refusal of these gentlemanly courtesies? In what class of actions Mr. Brougham's ought upon this occasion to be ranked we shall best express by a short story. In the year 1806 or 1807, several Oxonians were going up from Oxford to London. A fellow-passenger by chance on the same coach was a young American, nephew to President Adams. In the course of conversation a question arose as to the comparative degrees of liberty allowed by the English and the American constitutions. This had been discussed with some warmth, and the travelling party had advanced within eight or nine miles of the capital, when suddenly, at a turn of the road between Hounslow and London, some outriders of the royal guard announced that the King was on the road and not far behind. According to the custom observed in England, the coach drew up immediately to one side of the road, and (as is also the custom in England), when His Majesty came in sight a few minutes afterwards, all the Englishmen about the coach remained bareheaded until he had passed them. Hereupon '*Jonathan*' triumphed greatly as upon an unlooked-for adjudication in his favour of a dispute that could not otherwise have been determined.

It is hardly necessary to say, however, that his tendency to the abstract, and his incapacity to realise the "speculative" powerlessness of the ordinary newspaper-reader, led him to throw away thoughts, and whole trains of thought, that students and political economists would have pored over with delight, in long and elaborate "leaders," that were, we fear, unread save by the very few. The unpractical character of the man reveals itself here, though there is much in the columns of the "Westmoreland Gazette" that bespeaks his future eminence both as a thinker and as a writer. His lack of appreciation of the needs of a country newspaper is strongly brought out by the reasons he gives for persisting in

his efforts to raise the Westmoreland farmers to the region of philosophic principle. In reply to a correspondent who had urged more attention to the *unlearned* reader, he takes occasion to justify his position in endeavouring to win the suffrages of the learned, and claims vast advantages for any one as an interpreter of public opinion who has mixed familiarly with the higher as well as the lower classes of society :—

The editor will frankly avow that, in his judgment, the rank of a gentleman is for any person who presumes to influence public opinion an important qualification on its own account, and independently of its advantages in respect to education. He who is to speak *to* all classes, and occasionally to speak *of* all classes, ought to know something more of them all than can be gathered from books ; he ought to have a personal knowledge of every class from the highest to the lowest, and should have been upon the footing of a familiar acquaintance no less in the palace of the prince than in the cottage of the humblest peasant. On a triple account this may be demanded as necessary to accomplish him for his office—first, as furnishing him with that great body of general knowledge relating to things in perpetual flux and motion, which never finds its way into books, and is to be had only from extensive intercourse with the world ; secondly, for the sake of that particular knowledge by which he is to measure with accuracy the peculiar advantages, wants, and defects of every class, so as to be able profitably to adapt his addresses to each ; thirdly, for the sake of accrediting himself with every class, so as to justify the monitorial tone which he will sometimes find himself called upon to assume, and for the purpose of giving weight and effect to his opinions. No class will ever regard the monitor with much respect who is palpably, and upon the evidence of his own blunders, unacquainted with their actual condition. Apart, therefore, from its inestimable advantages as affording the means of regular education (*i.e.*, the pecuniary means and the leisure), the station of a gentleman has other and separate advantages of its own for him who presents himself as an organ of public feeling for giving

voice and expression to it where it is right, and as a corrector of public feeling where it goes astray. But what need for insisting upon advantages so obvious? It is not aristocratical to affirm them; it is not so much Jacobinical as it is irrational to deny them. No doubt Q. and P. Q. themselves, whatsoever they may *assert* for the support of an argument, in their *actions* bear a daily testimony to their own belief in these advantages. No doubt they seek their legal and medical advice from those who have had the means of cultivating that kind of knowledge; and, by parity of reason, they ought to seek their political knowledge from those whose station has allowed them the benefit of a good education, rather than from those who bring no previous knowledge (unless they claim to be inspired).

And he goes on to inform his readers that he has hopes of making the paper influential throughout the kingdom and in the universities—a result which, even though it might have been secured, looks very like hanging your grapes so high that, as befell the fox in the fable, you can but look at without enjoying them:—

The editor can assure his readers that his own personal friends in most of the universities, especially in the three weightiest—Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh—are quite competent in number and power to float the "Gazette" triumphantly into every section and division of those learned bodies. The paper would thus be put upon its trial. And what would be the issue he cannot permit himself to doubt, when he adds, that each and all of these friends are ready to furnish their literary assistance, in addition to that he may calculate upon in Westmoreland. Q. reminds the editor of his "uneducated readers" in Westmoreland. The editor does not forget them; but he is persuaded that it is a mere oversight in Q. to have neglected mentioning his *well-educated* and his *learned* readers in the same county, who are very numerous. And from them also he has reason to hope for powerful aid. He may add that, as respects this corner of the kingdom, he has received assurances of support from two of the most illustrious men in point

of intellectual pretensions that have appeared for some ages.* With such assistance there can be no presumption in supposing that the "Gazette" would have some *positive* means, as well as all the *negative* means, for making its way in the universities. The presumption would be in doubting it. The editor will go a step further. He will venture to affirm that, even without the powerful aid here noticed (to which he might have added a promise of co-operation from London, and the four great commercial towns of the second class, many of the third class, and so downwards—as also occasionally from Paris and Vienna, from Canada, and from Hindostan, &c.)—that even without the powerful aid here noticed, he could singly and unsupported secure to the "Gazette" one feature of originality which would draw upon it a general notice throughout Great Britain; and justly, inasmuch as it would give it a distinction peculiar to itself, and unshared by any other literary or scientific journal whatsoever. This the editor may say without vanity; for his part would be no more than a ministerial office—to select and to translate. His allusion is this—the German literature is at this time beyond all question, for science and for philosophy properly so called, the wealthiest in the world. It is an absolute Potosi; and a Potosi not like the present Potosi in Peru, which has been worked so long that at length it will not pay the workers; but a Potosi like that which was found on its first discovery by the Spaniards—a mine of which the riches are scarcely known by rumour to this country.

The files of the "Westmoreland Gazette" in those days present such an odd mixture of the really clever, piquant, and available, along with so much that was literally out of place, and worse than wasted, that we are compelled to own De Quincey was not born for a successful newspaper editor, and never could have been made one.

The disadvantage of his position in Kendal which he felt the most was his separation from his family. His engagements were so constant and

* Doubtless Wordsworth and Coleridge, or perhaps Southey.

absorbing, that visits to Grasmere could not be frequent. His letters to his wife are short, full of affection. Thus he writes to her shortly after he had assumed the duties :—

COMMERCIAL INN,
11 *o'clock on Thursday Night.*

MY DEAR WIFE,—I have this moment received your note. It has put me into a little better spirits ; for I have been in very bad spirits ever since I left home. I quitted Grasmere with a heavy heart, and I was sure I should find nothing in Kendal to comfort me. Indeed, I have found nothing here but trouble of all sorts. I hope, however, that I shall soon get the paper into a right train ; and the proprietors are very willing to allow me my own way. The trouble I find is solely among the inferior people about the press. I am truly grieved to hear of little Margaret's illness ; I hope that it is not the forerunner of anything worse. God bless her, poor little lamb ! If you come over to-morrow in a chaise, I shall be very happy to see you ; or if you prefer next week, I shall be very happy to attend you. God bless you, my sweet wife ! and believe me most affectionately yours, THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

Whilst he was editor of the "Westmoreland Gazette" he also wrote in "Blackwood" and in the "Quarterly Review," as we have seen. The following shows him in his best vein. He is reviewing Lord Castlereagh's account of Westmoreland, and can throw over his theme a ray of that captivating humour which is so characteristic :—

When I consider what it is that I have undertaken to do, when I consider what it is that I have done, that I have presumed to review and cut up the Foreign Secretary's account of Westmoreland, and not only so, but that (unlike all other reviewers) I have undertaken to give a better myself ; when I consider, further, that I shall thus have drawn upon myself the heavy displeasure of His Majesty's Government, and that my single and unworthy person is confronted, as it were, in single

duel with the whole of the present Administration (who will all naturally take part with Lord Castlereagh in this matter), I feel so much confounded that I am obliged to pause and to take two glasses of London particular Madeira. What am I, that I should presume to oppose the whole Cabinet, backed, as I fear they will be on this occasion, by the great local power of the King's Lieutenant for the two counties of Westmoreland and Cumberland? What am I, that I should present myself as the single opposition against the combined weight of the Lowther and Treasury influence? In myself I am nothing; but I have truth and ichthyology on my side, which Lord Castlereagh has not: and it is on those and on Entick's spelling-dictionary that I build my reliance in this cause; so that I shall proceed fearlessly; and I defy any gentleman of Kendal or Ambleside (however much attached to the present Administration) to contradict one word of what I shall say.

When I throw out this defiance, it will naturally be supposed that what I am going to say must be pretty notorious, and that I do not bring it forward as any discovery of my own, or as a matter that can be very new to most of my readers. In fact, I do not; the main proposition on which I build in opposing the present Administration is sufficiently familiar to all who know anything about Westmoreland, and can be no news except perhaps to some few persons in the African kingdom of Ashantee or in the Oriental one of Nepaul. It is in the development of this proposition that I pretend to some merit. I begin, then, with asserting (but rather as a postulate, and for the benefit of some people in Ashantee,* than as a theorem that can need any formal enunciation or proof), that the official account of Westmoreland was painfully superficial, inasmuch as not *Lakes and Hams*, but *Char and Peats*, are notoriously the two productions with which the fortunate county of Westmoreland solaces her defects in all other sorts of wealth. Blest in these riches beyond the rivalry of all other counties, and raised equally above

* The King of Ashantee, as was mentioned in some former number of the magazine, is a great reader of our miscellany, and has some knowledge of the Latin poets; but his studies appear to be ill-directed, as he is there stated to confine himself to the Commercial Report (if our memory does not deceive us).

detraction and competition, Westmoreland is rather proud than otherwise of that pleasing sterility in all other points which she everywhere exhibits, and I think with some reason. For look at her next neighbour to the east—Yorkshire, with her great long corpulent person, and her fat greasy pastures that turn a man's stomach to think of, stretched out basking her "hairy strength" like Milton's lubbar fiend, and, like *that* lubbar, perfectly content if her "bowl of cream be duly set!" We need not ask if *she* has any poets. But in Westmoreland what a contrast! A fine light gravelly soil, excellently watered, of which almost every square mile you can fix on will keep two cows; then, as to cream, I believe there never was any in Westmoreland. The milk is of a beautiful azure or cerulean colour as soon as it first sees the light (hence, by the way, a great saving of labour; for the Westmoreland milk comes into this world ready skimmed). All this, however, is digression. Yet, if the reader would stretch his indulgence so far as to bear with me in a little further digression in honour of the Westmoreland sterility (which, after all, is *not* digression, seeing that to this very sterility and gravelly soil, I am convinced, that we are indebted for the luxuriance of our admirable poets), I would attempt to illustrate the excellent effects of a hungry diet upon the wits of either man and beast by drawing the character of a Westmoreland sheep. To do this with any effect, I must contrast him with a sheep from Leicestershire or Lincolnshire. Perhaps some of my readers have seen the two in company together, as I have; if indeed that could be called company in which, from total want of sympathy and congeniality of temper, there could be no sort of conversation—the Westmoreland sheep manifesting a contempt that was almost like compassion for the comatose, apoplectic stupidity of his unwieldy relative; whilst he of Lincolnshire stared at his mercurial cousin with that sort of leaden-eyed dulness of astonishment with which a London police-magistrate might be supposed to survey me if I were called up before him for writing this article against Lord Castlereagh. Cast your eyes over any flock of Westmoreland sheep, and you will observe that there is scarcely one but looks like a person of some genius; in fact, most of them are so; for they all live by their wits, since, without a general system of robbery, no Westmoreland sheep could get on at all, having seldom more than a thousand acres apiece of Westmoreland

grass; and what is that for one sheep? Now turn to the Lincoln or Leicester sheep or "mug" (as they call him, and very justly). What a beast! his tail even presents a physical barrier to all activity. But in fact they are not a bit better when their tails are cut off, as, by the bye, I believe they generally are about Christmas; for at that season the Lincolnshire people make sheep-tail pies, which are sent all over the kingdom as presents, in pie-dishes as big as a kitchen-table; and such is the disrespectable character of the sheep in that county, that nobody pities them. I have heard it suggested, indeed, that they look grave, and as if they were thinking; but in fact it is all pretence; they are *not* thinking about anything—except the gratification of their passions; for a Lincolnshire "mug" is thoroughly unprincipled, and gives himself up deliberately to a licentious course of life. As the subject is rather unpleasant to a well-regulated mind, I shall say no more about it than just to suggest, as a word of parting counsel to the sheep of Lincoln in general, that pie-dishes, which I had occasion to mention just now, are surely a most fortunate invention for *them*, and that the sooner they get into them the better; for when they are once fairly dead and buried in a pie-dish, there's an end of it, and people are shy of reflecting much upon their past conduct. But really this is the only safe course left for their posthumous reputation; for, upon my word, it is distressing to all people of feeling to witness so much stupidity, and so many abortive attempts at running and jumping (to say nothing of their immoralities). But enough of these dull brutes; let us turn once again to a more pleasing subject. A Westmoreland sheep, I have already admitted, is not very conscientious about the rights of property. In this point indeed, as well as his wit and agility, he resembles the god Mercury; but barring that, his moral character is good. It is, however, in his intellectual character that his merit is most conspicuous; in the presence of a "mug" he looks like the most acute London swindler before a drowsy judge or recorder. In fact, in Westmoreland so much are most sheep respected that it is considered illiberal to regard them in the light of mutton. I remember being in company with an old wether at Grasmere who had manifestly made some progress in the Transcendental Philosophy. My friend Mr. de Q. lectured him for some time on the categories; he clearly showed the absurdity of Aristotle's ten predicaments,

with their long dangling tail of supplementary or post-predicaments, like the tail of a Lincolnshire "mug" (this comparison was put *ad hominem*, if I may so express it, and the old wether enjoyed the joke ; in fact, he said Aristotle had got into a cursed predicament. He concluded with a few words on the distinction between the analytic and synthetic unity of consciousness). I never saw anybody pay more attention ; not like young ladies at the Royal Institution, who never look at the lecturer since Sir H. D. has withdrawn his fine eyes and his beautiful kid gloves. This man, on the contrary—this sheep, I should say—looked at nobody but the lecturer, nodding occasionally when he assented, and sometimes striking the ground with one of his fore-feet, especially at the pathetic passages on the connection between cause and effect, or wherever he wished to express his emphatical approbation. On the whole, his opinion seemed favourable to Kant ; and I remarked that, just as the lecture closed, a flock of giddy young sheep and lambs happening to come past, this respectable Transcendentalist ran after and joined them—anxious no doubt to communicate the benefits of philosophy. But all this is digression, into which my zeal for Westmoreland has betrayed me. It explains, however, the main secret of the poetical supremacy of the Lake county ; for, when sheer hunger makes the sheep transcendental, it cannot but make the poets sublime.

For the greater part of a year De Quincey remained editor, and resigned only under the necessity of turning his pen to more profitable account. For some years after he remained an occasional contributor, and sent a few racy notes on current topics.

After he had retired from the editorship of the "Westmoreland Gazette," he made an effort to settle himself in Edinburgh, which, however, did not succeed. We have records of it in his correspondence, records also of the great kindness of friends there, as in this letter to his wife :—

Saturday Morning, December 9, 1820.

My Dear Margaret,—It grieves me to think how regularly I have been thwarted in all attempts to write to you hitherto by constant interruptions. Even now I have only time for a few lines; but, remembering that if I were to defer writing until to-morrow's post the letter would reach Kendal on *Tuesday*, and Ambleside, therefore, not till Wednesday (from the want of a post on Tuesday), I snatch one minute to tell you that I am tolerably well—much better, at least, than when I left home—and that all is going well. All my old friends here are more kind than I can express. Without any trouble on my part, they have procured me lodgings, books, and everything that I can wish, or rather ten times more. And invitations crowd so fast upon me that I hardly know how I shall get through all my writing, &c. In the course of to-morrow I will write a *long* letter to you; and as I will be careful to put it into the post on Monday morning, you will have it by Wednesday (that is to say, as soon as if it had been put into the post to-morrow).

Write a few lines to me by *Wednesday's* post to say that all is going on well, no matter how little. Give my best love to the children, and believe me, with kind remembrances to Mary, yours, my dear Peggy, most faithfully and affectionately,

"Thomas de Quincey.

Direct to me at No. 30 Northumberland Street, Edinburgh.

P.S.—Southey was kind and polite beyond even anything I expected, though he was always as much so as anybody I ever knew.

CHAPTER XII.

IN LONDON AGAIN.

OF De Quincey's excessive liberalities we have had occasion to speak. His readiness to befriend others in those years from 1808 to 1820 was pursued even to the point of madness and self-ruin. Losses did not teach him customary prudence. Failures of business firms involving great sacrifices of his capital did not make him slower to aid his friends. Indeed, it may be said that at this period, as afterwards, he did not have a friend who was not welcome to his purse; and letters on letters before us bear this out, though we are hardly free to print them. Loans of large sums were given in many instances, some of which were honourably repaid, some not. A full list of his benefactions during this period, were such attainable, would conclusively attest this; and we venture to say would atone in most minds for charges preferred against him sometimes in after years of making too free with the knowledge he had gained of great contemporaries in private intercourse. We do not think he often overstepped the legitimate limit; and

if in some instances he spoke somewhat too freely, it might well be pleaded that he regarded himself as having suffered wrong. In the year 1821 we find that a great part of his patrimony had melted away, and that he was in difficulties. During his life at Oxford, as we have seen, the narrow illiberality of his guardians had led him to throw himself into the hands of Jews, who, though he attests that they honourably fulfilled what they promised, needed from him, as from others, interest commensurate with the risks they ran. His necessities had become imperative by the spring of 1821, and it was under a heavy sense of painful work before him that he struggled to rid himself wholly of the incubus of opium. It was whilst he was endeavouring to "untwist the last links of the chain" that he made his way to London in the summer of that year, to seek engagements as a writer. He himself says of this time:—

"I was descending the mighty ladder, stretching to the clouds as it seemed, by which I had imperceptibly attained my giddy altitude—that point from which it had seemed equally impossible to go forward or backward. To wean myself from opium, I had resolved inexorably; and finally I accomplished my vow. But the transition stage was the worst state to support."

He thus indicates to us the special features of the sufferings incident to that period:—

"I was ill at that time, and for years after,—ill from the effects of opium upon the liver; and one primary indication of any illness felt in that organ is peculiar depression of spirits. Hence arose a singular effect of reciprocal action in maintaining a

state of dejection. From the original physical depression caused by the derangement of the liver, arose a sympathetic depression of the mind, disposing me to believe that I never could extricate myself; and from this belief arose, by reaction, a thousandfold increase of the physical depression. I began to view my unhappy London life—a life of literary toils, odious to my heart—as a permanent state of exile from my Westmoreland home. My three eldest children, at that time in the most interesting stages of childhood and infancy, were in Westmoreland; and so powerful was my feeling (derived merely from a deranged liver) of some long, never-ending separation from my family, that at length, in pure weakness of mind, I was obliged to relinquish my daily walks in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, from the misery of seeing children in multitudes that too forcibly recalled my own."

This piteous recoil even from the sight of childish faces that suggested the faces of his own children in Westmoreland, debarred him too largely from daily exercise, in which lay his one element of hope. We are not therefore greatly surprised to learn that during the latter portion of his stay in London, that is in 1823–24, he fell for the third time under the dominion of opium. We can easily understand and sympathise with him in the struggles and difficulties that would inevitably present themselves in such circumstances.

The general difficulties under which a man, who has hitherto written mostly for his own pleasure, finds himself working, when he must have in his eye the tastes and demands of a capricious audience, were

much intensified in De Quincey's case by difficulties of a special and personal kind. Some of these he tells us he experienced in common with Coleridge, others not. "Coleridge," he says, "assured me that he never could read anything he had written without a sense of overpowering disgust. . . . I, like Mr. Coleridge, could not endure what I had written for some time after I had written it. I also shrunk from treating any subject which I had much considered; but more, I believe, as recoiling from the intricacy and the elaborateness which had been made known to me in the course of considering it, and on account of the difficulty or the toilsomeness which might be fairly presumed from the mere fact that I *had* long considered it, or could have found it necessary to do so, than from any blind, mechanical feeling inevitably associated (as in Coleridge it was) with a second survey of the same subject. One other effect there was from the opium, and I believe it had some place in Coleridge's list of morbid affections caused by opium, and of disturbances extended even to the intellect—which was, that the judgment was for a time grievously impaired, sometimes even totally abolished, as applied to anything I had recently written. . . . This is mere childish helplessness, or senile paralysis of the judgment, which distresses the man in attempting to grasp the upshot and the total effect of the *tout ensemble* of what he has himself so recently produced. . . . There was, however, one point in which my case differed from that of Mr. Coleridge. It was this—that at times, when I had slept at more regular hours for several nights consecutively, and had armed myself by a

sudden increase of the opium for a few days running, I recovered at times a remarkable glow of jovial spirits. In some such artificial respites it was, from my usual state of distress, and purchased at a heavy price of subsequent suffering, that I wrote the greater part of the 'Opium Confessions,' in the autumn of 1821."

In such conditions, it is needless to say that all the supports that friendship and kindly interest could furnish were needed and welcomed. Now it was that De Quincey found in Charles Lamb the true friend that he had sought for. Of Lamb's kindly aid, so delicately administered, he never ceased to speak with gratitude and delight. He acknowledges that, though he had seen Lamb several times on visits to London earlier, till 1821 he did not thoroughly know him—that, indeed, he had misunderstood him, having allowed, as we are led to infer, an ironical way Lamb had of touching on certain pet subjects to stand too largely for his real character. We must let De Quincey here tell shortly of his several meetings with Lamb in former years, that we may the better appreciate the relation of the two essayists during the years with which we are now concerned, and afterwards. It was in 1804 that De Quincey first saw Elia. Having got a letter of introduction from a literary friend, he called for him at the India House, during one of the trips taken to London whilst he was at Oxford. This is the picture De Quincey has given us of that meeting:—

"I walked into one of the two open doorways of the railing, and stood close by the high stool of

him who occupied the first place within the little aisle. I touched his arm by way of recalling him from his lofty Leadenhall speculations to this sublunary world; and presenting my letter, asked if that gentleman (pointing to the address) was really a citizen of the present room; for I had been repeatedly misled by the directions given me into wrong rooms. The gentleman smiled; it was a smile not to be forgotten. This was Lamb. And here occurred a *very, very* little incident—one of those which pass so fugitively that they are gone whizzing away into Lethe almost before your attention can have arrested them; but it was an incident which, to me who happened to notice it, served to express the courtesy and delicate consideration of Lamb's manners. The seat upon which he sat was a very high one; so absurdly high, by the way, that I can imagine no possible use or sense in such an altitude, unless it were to restrain the occupant from playing truant at the fire, by opposing Alpine difficulties to his descent. Whatever might be the original purpose of this aspiring seat, one serious dilemma arose from it, and this it was which gave the occasion to Lamb's act of courtesy. . . . Between two extremes Lamb had to choose—between appearing ridiculous for a moment by going through a ridiculous evolution, stepping down by steps and stages analogous to dismounting from horseback—an evolution which no man could execute with grace; or, on the other hand, appearing lofty and assuming in a degree which his truly humble nature (for he was the humblest of men in the pretensions which he put forward for himself) must have shrunk from with horror. Nobody who knew Lamb can

doubt how the problem was solved; he began to dismount instantly; and, as it happened that the very first *round* of his descent obliged him to turn his back upon me as if for a sudden purpose of flight, he had an excuse for laughing, which he did heartily, saying at the same time something to this effect, that I must not judge from first appearances; that he should revolve upon me; that he was not going to fly; and other facetiæ, which challenged a general laugh from the clerical brotherhood. When he had reached the basis of *terra firma* on which I was standing, naturally, as a mode of thanking him for his courtesy, I presented my hand, which in a general case I should certainly not have done; for I cherished in an ultra English degree the English custom (a wise custom) of bowing in frigid silence on a first introduction to a stranger; but to a man of literary talent, and one who had just practised so much kindness in my favour, at so probable a hazard to himself of being laughed at for his pains, I could not maintain that frosty reserve. Lamb took my hand; did not absolutely reject it; but rather repelled my advance by his manner. This, however, long afterwards, I found was only a habit derived from his too great sensitiveness to the variety of people's feelings, which run through a gamut so infinite of degrees and modes as to make it unsafe for any man who respects himself to be too hasty in his allowances of familiarity."

On being invited, he went to tea at the Lambs, in the Temple where they were then living; but that element of uncongeniality then arose from the pleasure Lamb apparently took in throwing ridicule on the subjects to which De Quincey was devoted with

enthusiasm utterly beyond words. "My admiration for Coleridge," confesses De Quincey (as in a perhaps still greater degree for Wordsworth), "was literally in no respect short of a religious feeling; it had indeed all the sanctity of religion, and all the tenderness of a human veneration." But Lamb did not seem to share it. "Like Diogenes, he threw upon us a scoffing air, as of one who stands upon a pedestal of eternity, looking down upon those who share in the transitory feelings of their own age."

In 1808 and succeeding years, during visits to London, when De Quincey never failed to call on Coleridge, he repeatedly met Lamb there, and began to correct his earlier impressions of him; the peculiar liking that had arisen between Lamb and De Quincey's sailor-brother, Pink, over pictures and other things, serving no doubt as a link.* But it was reserved for the years 1821–25 to perfect the sympathy be-

* All readers of De Quincey's works will remember with what affectionate tenderness he tells the romantic story of this Pink—how, like his elder brother, he ran away from school where he was under a cruel pedant, and went to sea; how he fell among pirates, and was saved from being murdered simply by his likeableness, which amounted almost to personal fascination; how he was taken prisoner by the Danes; and gaining his freedom distinguished himself in the Royal Navy; and how, finally, he mournfully perished just when bright prospects seemed to be opening for him. As long as he kept up correspondence with Thomas, he never failed to send kind messages to Lamb. "Pink liked Lamb greatly; and used in all his letters to request that I would present his best regards to that Charles Lamb, 'who would not be humbugged by the old rascal in Bond Street;'" *i.e.*, a picture-dealer who was high in praise of a certain work of art.

tween them. We have from De Quincey's pen this glimpse of the Lambs:—

"The Lambs had heard of my being in solitary lodgings, and insisted on my coming to dine with them, which more than once I did in the winter of 1821–22. The mere reception by the Lambs was so full of goodness and hospitable feeling, that it kindled animation in the most cheerless or torpid of invalids. I cannot imagine that any *memorabilia* occurred during the visit. There were no strangers; Charles Lamb, his sister, and myself made up the party. Even this was done in kindness. They knew that I should have been oppressed by an effort such as must be made in the society of strangers; and they placed me by their own fireside where I could say as little or as much as I pleased. We dined about five o'clock, and it was one of the hospitalities inevitable to the Lambs, that any game which they might receive from rural friends in the course of the week, was reserved for the day of a friend's dining with them.

"In regard to wine, Lamb and myself had the same habit—perhaps it rose to the dignity of a principle—viz., to take a good deal *during* dinner—none *after* it. Consequently, as Miss Lamb (who drank only water) retired almost with the dinner itself, nothing remained for men of our principles, the rigour of which we had illustrated by taking rather too much of old port before the cloth was drawn, except talking amœbœan colloquy, or, in Dr. Johnson's phrase, a dialogue of brisk reciprocation. But this was impossible; even Lamb, at this period of his life, then passed regularly, after taking wine, under a

brief eclipse of sleep. It descended upon him as softly as a shadow. In a gross person laden with superfluous flesh, and sleeping heavily, this would have been disagreeable; but in Lamb, thin even to meagreness, spare and wiry as an Arab of the desert, or as Thomas Aquinas, wasted by scholastic vigils, the affection of sleep seemed rather a network of aerial gossamer than of earthly cobweb—more like a golden haze falling upon him gently from the heavens than a cloud exhaling upwards from the flesh. Motionless in his chair as a bust, breathing so gently as scarcely to seem entirely alive, he presented the image of repose midway between life and death like the repose of sculpture; and to one who knew his history, a repose contrasting with the calamities and internal storms of his life. I have heard more persons than I can now distinctly recall, observe of Lamb when sleeping, that his countenance in that state assumed an expression almost seraphic, from its intellectual beauty of outline, its childlike simplicity, and its benignity. It could not be called a transfiguration that sleep worked in his face; for the features wore essentially the same expression when waking; but sleep spiritualised that expression, exalted it, and also harmonised it. Much of the change lay in that last process. The eyes it was that disturbed the unity of effect in Lamb's waking face. They gave a restlessness to the character of his intellect, shifting, like northern lights, through every mode of combination with fantastic playfulness, and sometimes by fiery gleams, obliterating for the moment that pure light of benignity which was the predominant reading on his features."

With a subdued enthusiasm he thus sets forth his conception of Lamb's character :—

"The very basis of Lamb's character was laid in horror of affectation. If he found himself by accident using a rather fine word, notwithstanding that it might be the most forcible in that place (the word *arrest*, suppose, in certain situations for the word *catch*), he would, if it were allowed to stand, make merry with his own grandiloquence at the moment; and, in after-moments, he would continually ridicule that class of words, by others carried to an extreme of pedantry—the word *arride*, for instance, used in the sense of *pleasing or winning the approbation*—just as Charles Fox, another patron of simplicity, or at least of humility of style, was accustomed to use the word *vilipend*, as a standing way of sarcastically recalling to the reader's mind the Latinising writers of English. Hence—that is, from this intense sincerity and truth of character—Lamb would allow himself to say things that shocked the feelings of the company—shocked sometimes in the sense of startling or electrifying, as by something that was odd; but also sometimes shocked with the sense of what *was* revolting, as by a swift laying bare of naked, shivering human nature. . . . In miscellaneous gatherings Lamb said little unless an opening arose for a pun. And how effectual that sort of small shot was from *him*, I need not say to anybody who remembers his infirmity of stammering, and his dexterous management of it for purposes of light and shade. He was often able to train the roll of stammers into settling upon the words immediately preceding the effective one, by which means the keynote

of the jest or sarcasm, benefitting by the sudden liberation of his embargoed voice, was delivered with the force of a pistol-shot. That stammer was worth an annuity to him as an ally of his wit. Firing under cover of that advantage, he did triple execution; for, in the first place, the distressing sympathy of the hearers with *his* distress of utterance won for him unavoidably the silence of deep attention; and then, whilst he had us all hoaxed into attitude of mute suspense by an appearance of distress that he perhaps did not really feel, down came a plunging shot into the very thick of us, with ten times the effect it would else have had."

Seldom, indeed, in his later days does De Quincey allow himself to pass into enthusiasm over individuals, but this he does in the case of Lamb, duly celebrating the unaffected generosity and goodness, of which that satirical manner had been but a kind of veil. "I knew Lamb," he exclaims; "and I know certain cases in which he was concerned—cases which it is difficult to publish with any regard to the feelings of persons now living, but which (if published in all their circumstances) would show him to be the very noblest of human beings. He was a man in a sense more eminent than would be conceivable by many people, *princely*—nothing short of that—in his beneficence. Many liberal people I have known in this world—many who were charitable in the widest sense—many munificent people; but never any one upon whom, for bounty, for indulgence and forgiveness, for charitable construction of doubtful or mixed actions, and for regal munificence, you might have thrown yourself with so absolute a

reliance as upon this comparatively poor Charles Lamb."

To Lamb, De Quincey was now indebted for his introduction to Messrs. Taylor & Hessey, into whose hands the "London Magazine" had just come. Mr. Taylor, who had written some books, was editor, but he had wisely surrounded himself by a group of distinguished men; and, ready to receive new contingents, gave admiring welcome to Mr. de Quincey. "After the good old fashion of the GREAT TRADE, these genial booksellers used to assemble their contributors round their hospitable table in Fleet Street, where Mr. de Quincey was introduced to his new allies."

With Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd at this time, too, he enjoyed intercourse. With him De Quincey tells us he had become acquainted in 1808, "in the beautiful hall of the Middle Temple, whence (after dining together in the agreeable style inherited from older days) we sometimes adjourned to our coffee at the chambers of the future author of *Ion*, and enjoyed the luxury of conversation with the *élite* of the young Templars." Talfourd, in one of his Memoirs, thus sketches the better-known notables of these gatherings at Taylor & Hessey's:—"There was Lamb, with humanity ripened among town-bred experiences, and pathos matured by sorrow, at his wisest, sagest, indiscreetest best; Barry Cornwall, in the first bloom of his modest and enduring fame, streaking the darkest passion with beauty; John Hamilton Reynolds, lighting up the wildest eccentricities and most striking features of many-coloured life with vivid fancy; and, with others of less note, Hazlitt,

whose pen, unloosed from the chain which earnest thought and metaphysical dreamings had woven, gave radiant expression to the results of the solitary musings of many years."

Thomas Hood, too, was one of the "London Magazine" brotherhood. He had lost his health as an engraver, and found himself at twenty-one with literary instincts eager for exercise and development. He was fortunate in being introduced to Messrs. Taylor and Hessey; and was engaged as a sort of sub-editor for the magazine, shortly before De Quincey's advent. Many a delicious little essay—forecasting, but no more, by the naïvest vein of fun, his future pre-eminence as a wit—did he throw into its pages between 1820 and 1824; and he also made friends and gained many pleasant recollections, which he has set forth with all his characteristic drollery in his "Literary Reminiscences." We can easily fancy how, as sub-editor, it would often fall to his lot to stir up the memories of contributors about times and seasons—especially one contributor, to whom, nevertheless, he refers in a vein of love and respect, such as even his bantering and punning manner does in no way suffice to conceal. Much in De Quincey called forth Hood's sympathies, it is clear; and thus the Opium-Eater figures in his "Reminiscences":—

"When it was my frequent and agreeable duty to call on Mr. de Quincey (being an uncommon name to remember, the servant associated it, on the *memoria technica* principle, with a sore throat, and always pronounced it Quinsy), and I have found him at home, quite at home, in the midst of a German Ocean of Literature, in a storm—flooding all the floor, the table

and the chairs—billows of books tossing, tumbling, surging open,—on such occasions I have willingly listened by the hour, whilst the Philosopher, standing, with his eyes fixed on one side of the room, seemed to be less speaking than reading from 'a handwriting on the wall.' Now and then he would diverge, for a Scotch mile or two, to the right or left, till I was tempted to inquire, with Peregrine in "John Bull" (Coleman's, not Hook's), 'Do you never deviate?'—but he always came safely back to the point where he had left, not lost the scent, and thence hunted his topic to the end. But look!—we are in the small hours, and a change comes o'er the spirit of that 'old familiar face.' A faint hectic tint leaves the cheek, the eyes are a degree dimmer, and each is surrounded by a growing shadow—signs of the waning influence of that Potent Drug whose stupendous Pleasures and enormous Pains have been so eloquently described by the English Opium-Eater. Marry, I have one of his Confessions with his own name and mark to it: an apology for a certain stain on his MS., the said stain being a large purplish ring. 'Within that circle none durst drink but he,'—in fact, the impression, coloured, of a tumbler of laudanum negus, warm, without sugar."

Not less characteristic perhaps is a footnote which Hood gives to this passage:—

"On a visit to Norfolk, I was much surprised to find that opium or opic, as it was vulgarly called, was quite in common use in the form of pills among the lower classes, *in the vicinity of the Fens.* It is not probable that persons in such a rank of life had read the "Confessions," or, might not one suspect that as Denis Brul-

gruddery was driven to drink by the stale, flat, and unprofitable prospects of Muckslush Heath, so the Fen People in the dreary, foggy, cloggy, boggy wastes of Cambridge and Lincolnshire, had flown to the drug for the sake of the magnificent *scenery* that filled the splendid visions of the historian."

But the genial Thomas Hood kept other and less tangible memorials of the Opium-Eater than that we have just presented. Doubtless he often met De Quincey at these dinners at Taylor & Hessey's, or at Charles Lamb's; and many years afterwards reminiscences of De Quincey's talk formed the text of one of the most humorous and touching passages in the whole range of Hood's writings—a passage in which he gently played with the idea of death, and made it yield him tribute. It is to be found at the close of the preface to "Hood's Own":—

"Between ourselves, as I once heard the Opium-Eater declare, it would have been 'extremely inconvenient to pay the debt of nature at that particular juncture;' nor, to be candid, do I quite know," he goes on to illustrate the Opium-Eater's remark, "when it would altogether suit me to settle it, so, like other persons in narrow circumstances, I laughed, and gossipped, and played the agreeable with all my might; and as such pleasant behaviour sometimes obtains a respite from a human creditor, who knows but that it may prove successful with the Universal mortgagee? At all events, here I am, humming 'Jack's Alive!' and my own dear skilful native physician gives me hopes for a longer lease than appeared from the foreign reading of the Covenants. He declares, indeed, that, anatomically, my

heart is lower hung than usual—but what of that? *The more need to keep it up!"*

At the time when Thomas Hood was in way of making sub-editorial calls, there can be but little doubt that De Quincey, after having occupied apartments in Soho for a short period, had betaken himself to what proved a more permanent abode at York Street, Covent Garden, where we find him domiciled, save, indeed, occasionally during a few months' absence at a time in Westmoreland, up to the beginning of 1824. We find Mr. H. G. Bohn, in Lowndes' "Bibliographer's Manual," making a note bearing on this point:—

"Those 'Confessions' were written in a little room at the back of what later became Mr. H. G. Bohn's premises, No. 4 York Street, Covent Garden, where Mr. de Quincey resided, in comparative seclusion, for several years. He had previously lived in the neighbourhood of Soho Square, and for some years was a frequent visitor to the shop of Mr. Bohn's father, then the principal dealer in German books. The writer remembers that he always seemed to speak in a kind of whisper."

A biographer who affects to know a great deal about such matters at that time, says that De Quincey did not often appear at the gatherings at Taylor and Hessey's; adding, that "the expression of his face was intelligent, but cramped and somewhat peevish; and that he was self-involved, and did not add to the cheerfulness of the meeting." But of a certain order of biographies one soon gets doubtful, more especially when one comes on such a sentence as this:—"Clare afterwards saw him [Lamb] with the 'London' writers, and noticed his dislike to the *two* Scotchmen

—De Quincey and Cunningham,"—a statement as groundless as well could be. Of course we know that Charles Lamb, in his "Imperfect Sympathies" and elsewhere, has spoken with somewhat of hostility of Scotch*men;* but expressions like these in a genial essay, traversing an erratic circle of sentiment, ought not to be taken with such harsh construction as to make him assert that he could not abide a Scotch*man*. But then De Quincey was not a Scotchman; and his intimate association with Edinburgh, which alone could have given rise to the impression, had not yet begun.

But even if De Quincey had been "peevish," he had found fit companionship in Hazlitt, with his harshness and gloom, his dislike of contemporary literature, and his devotion to the genius and art of a past time, and his inconsistent idolatry of Napoleon. Several times, De Quincey tells us, he walked for a few miles with Hazlitt through London late at night, and after leaving a party; but always "felt depressed by the spectacle of a mind constantly in agitation from the gloomier passions."

The evident tendency of such gatherings as that at Taylor & Hessey's is to become ill-assorted, through the submergence of the social feelings under those of business and self-interest. Besides, there were special drawbacks to De Quincey's full enjoyment. The conductors of the "London Magazine" were dissenters, if they were not even touched by a kind of free-thinking; and it was a part of their policy to deal freely not only with the Church, but with religious questions. De Quincey, in spite of a philosophic desire to investigate all things for himself, confesses

that:—"Being myself, not by birth and breeding only, but upon the deliberate adoption of my judgment, an affectionate son of the Church of England, in respect to her doctrines, her rites, her discipline, and her internal government, it both shocked and grieved me to meet with what seemed to me so much levity of rash judgment amongst the thoughtful and well-principled,—so harsh an illiberality amongst the liberal, so little consideration amongst the considerate."

But if such drawbacks arose in the social meetings to which he was invited, there were few drawbacks to the advantages which speedily arose to De Quincey from the appearance of his first contributions in the "London Magazine." He had intended unambitiously to begin with translations from the German; but his opium experiences, and his resolute efforts to escape from the thraldom of the drug, had of course been the subject of conversation on his first introduction to the circle, which was so impressed by his recitals, that he was asked to inaugurate his connection with the magazine by a record of his opium experiences. Accordingly, there appeared in the "London Magazine" for October and November 1821, the "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater." Few magazine articles have ever produced a deeper or a more general impression.

We have found among his papers a little bundle of letters, which Mr. Taylor, of the firm of Messrs. Taylor & Hessey, had handed to him as likely to afford him gratification from the favourable verdict of distinguished men. Amongst them are notes

from Sir James Mackintosh, Horace Smith, and Robert Montgomery. Sir James says :—

"I have just read the second part of the 'Opium-Eater' with more delight than I know how to express. I felt such a wish to read the first that I could not help telling you that poor Scott [the former editor of the "London Magazine"] used to send me the magazine, and that if you should follow his example, I can afford to pay you regularly by the pleasure which I shall experience every month, if the publication continues to be good. . . . I had not the soreness which your critic on Madame de Staël supposed I should feel at some passage of his criticism, and I read of parliamentary debates being 'the rinsings of the human understanding' without abating or embittering my admiration of the Opium-Eater."

Mr. Horace Smith, who dates from Versailles, is equally enthusiastic :—"Several literary avocations have hitherto prevented my contributing to the 'London,' but I hope soon to have more leisure, and to send you something; though you really seem to have little need of new hands or heads. What an admirable paper the 'Confessions of an Opium-Eater'! I have seen nothing so original and interesting in periodical literature."

The numbers were speedily exhausted, and a reprint appeared early in 1822, and a second edition in 1823. To this little volume an appendix was added, in which the writer gave a tabulated report of his process of reducing the amount taken day by day. The book whetted the interest, instead of satisfying it. De Quincey, however,

could not at that time see his way to make additions to the Opium-Confessions. In not a few quarters he was astonished to find doubts raised whether there was not an element of fiction in the narrative, and in others a blunt assertion made that a *ruse* had been tried on the credulity of the reading public by a mere invention. He could not then bring himself to write more on a subject which seemed to have such fascination for readers in general—learned and simple alike—that a mere popularity-seeker might well have envied him his prerogative, and gone on producing. The doubt as to the complete genuineness of the record was soon uttered by those whose opinion could not but carry weight. The "North American Review" merely gathered up and set in critical language a feeling which widely obtained at the time of the publication of the "Confessions," when it said:—

"We should like to go behind the screen on which he has been pleased to cast the shadows, and see how far the reality corresponds with the picture; and learn, too, something more of those portions which now lie as a blank, since the filling of them is quite necessary for a full understanding of what is so skilfully portrayed. Not that we doubt the truthfulness of the unusually frank narrative, or have a right to pry into personal secrets which the writer chooses to conceal; but we are sometimes in doubt whether what is sometimes stated apparently as narrative, is not really meant for brilliant fiction, or at least for 'fiction founded on fact.'"

And in the "Sheffield Iris" Mr. James Montgomery wrote some articles, in the course of which

he expressed the same opinion; giving in the opening so striking a theory of dreams and dreaming, that we cannot resist the temptation to present it to our readers, as else they might have no chance of perusing it—a piece of writing on its own account well worthy of this position, even had it not been written by so true a poet and so consistent a thinker:—

"Man leads a double life on earth: he inhabits a world of reality by day, and a world of imagination by night. A third of human existence would be lost if the blank space of sleep were not filled up with pictured fancies that amuse the brain in dreams; and these, how grotesque and extravagant soever they be, yet bear such analogy to truth, that, were all the actions of an individual recorded on one hand, and his dreams brought to light on the other, it would puzzle Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas themselves to say, whether his character might not be less equivocally determined by the latter than the former. One thing is clear, that more of the secrets of his heart would be betrayed from the completion of that life which he leads in sleep than that which he leads before the world. Awake, and among his fellow-creatures, whose eyes are at all times upon him, man acts, even when he is least conscious of it, under habitual restraint; but the scene of his dreams is the sanctuary of his own mind, into which none beside himself can intrude. The miscreated shapes that people them are the offspring of his peculiar phantasy, and no eye but his can see them; nor, unless he chooses to divulge his invisible adventures in that *terra incognita*, is there one breathing that

can track his footsteps thither, or by any felicity of apprehension catch a glimpse of its frontier, any more than a spirit can be followed in its flight through the valley of the shadow of death, or the region in the eternal world that receives it be described by mortal optics from this side of the grave. When man enters the cave of Morpheus, he disappears from the multitude, and remains inaccessible till his involuntary return.

"In such retirement, under cover of night more impenetrable than that which envelops the universe —in a little world of his own where all is light and life and liberty to him and to him only, the slumberer is thoroughly and purely himself; he acts, he speaks, he thinks, he feels, without disguise and without reserve. He cannot help being honest here in the exercise of his virtues, or the exposure of his vices; there is no hypocrisy beyond that ineffable point, which we all may pass thousands of times, yet never *recollect* passing it once—the point of falling asleep. We shall be told, and we admit, that there are innumerable fallacies in dreams—'the stuff that dreams are made of' is proverbial for that which is most puerile, incongruous, and inane. It is not, however, what they are, but what they represent, that deserves attention, and will repay it. The images of which they are composed may be hieroglyphics, more undecipherable than those of Egypt, without the key that unlocks their mysteries; that key every man possesses for his own use, and employing it he may learn, from apparently unintelligible jargon, lessons of self-knowledge whereby to regulate his waking-hours; for to these all his

night visions have a reference, and are as surely reflections, however misshapen of their forms, as the Spectre of the Alps, towering from the valley to the firmament, at sunrise, is only an ærial image of the beholder himself, dilated by mist through immensity. But it may be prudent to draw in here; perhaps we have already said more than we can prove—which is the easiest thing in the world to do, as the reader will soon see, if he tries his knack of assertion on any paradoxical topic;—be it understood then, that it is the moral and not the fable of dreams into which we must look for the interpretation of life and character; that fable, like the fictions of poetry, is often distorted with strange and irrelevant associations, which have either no meaning at all, or no meaning worth unravelling. But, that the phantoms and changes that occur in dreams, while they are mere repetitions, cross-readings, and exaggerations of matters of fact, at the same time exemplify the habits, pursuits, understandings, affections, and antipathies of the dreamers, may be ascertained by anybody who will take the trouble to retrace and compare the remembrances of his own nocturnal vagaries. There may be persons of such adamant frames and imperturbable spirits, that these echoes of life are silent with them; the night answers not to the day while they repose, nor does slumber do more for them than it does for plants which are said to sleep, but were never yet known to dream. These may think that we rave, when we give so much importance to *unrealities;* but could one of these phlegmatic gentry catch his neighbour napping, and walk into his dream, he would probably make such

discoveries there as might cause him to love or hate, fear or despise, that neighbour, not only more than he had formerly done, but more than he would otherwise ever have had occasion to do.

"We have been led into this rhapsody by reading the 'Confessions of an Opium-Eater,' lately published, of whose dreams some superb specimens will be found in our last page. Opium-eating is not a very common taste in this country, nor is there much fear that any reader will be tempted to contract it, for the sake of being tortured and transported, as this marvellous sufferer has been, in the process of recovery from the perdition into which the fell drug had absorbed him. He, indeed, is evidently a man of fiery temperament, and vulgar beings, even if they do learn to swallow with delight as much crude abomination in a day as would 'poison six dragoons and their horses,' must not hope to have their darkness illumined by visions so tremendously magnificent and exquisitely agonising as his were. They can expect nothing, but that 'the confusion' of their stupid dreams will be 'worse confounded,' when the Asiatic demon in the disguise of

'Divine oblivion of low-thoughted care'

has usurped the empire of their brain; for opium is like 'love' and like the 'moon,' whose influence, according to Sheridan, 'acting upon men of dull souls, makes idiots of them, but meeting subtler spirits, betrays their course and urges sensibility to madness.'

"But, if nobody in his senses is likely to be allured

to the practice of eating this insane drug 'that takes the reason prisoner,' by reading the 'Confessions of an Opium-Eater,' many might be profited by the resolute perusal of them with self-application; for it may be safely affirmed, that every habitual indulgence of appetite or intellect, beyond what nature requires, or will endure, for the health of body or mind, is a species of opium-eating. Such, cordials, exhilaratives, and stimulants are generally, in the first instance, resorted to as lenitives of pain, reliefs from languor or resources in idleness; they soon become necessary gratifications, affording little either of pleasure or pain in the use (though abstinence is misery), till in the sequel they grow into tyrannous excesses that exhaust the animal spirits, debilitate the mind, and consume the frame with disease which no medicine can reach. The drunkard, in this sense, is an opium-eater; he puts an 'enemy into his mouth that takes away his senses;' and the fools' paradise, into which liquor transports him, lies on 'the broad way that leadeth down to destruction.' The epicure, in this sense, is an opium-eater; he devours himself alive, and in every dish that is served up at his table—were his eyes opened—he might see a part of his body, ay, and of his soul, laid for sacrifice on the only altar at which he worships with devotion. The snuff-taker, and the tobacco smoker, in this sense, are opium-eaters; these luxuries, as well as eating and drinking, may be enjoyed in moderation, but where does moderation end and abuse begin? That fine line of distinction was never yet traced with assurance, and the only safety lies many a league on the right side of it.

The 'Indian weed' may be less promptly deleterious than the 'Asiatic,' but in this country it is scarcely a question that the former destroys more victims than the latter.

"But there are moral and sentimental opium-eaters. The idler is one of these. There is not a drug in the Pharmacopœia so deadly as time, when it is a drug. Every other poison, from opium to the juice of the lysas, only produces death *at last;* this produces instant death, and perpetuates it too, for the idler 'is dead even while he liveth.' We talk of 'killing time;' we deceive ourselves, time in this world, at least, is immortal; and he who kills but a moment, kills just so much of himself. It were better to spend our days in the grave, than thus to misspend them above ground. The novel-reader, in this sense, is an opium-eater. How the mind is teased and pleased, bewildered and weakened, fatigued and tormented—while the heart is unconsciously experiencing a process by which its honest sensibilities are blunted, and its affections disordered, if not absolutely vitiated, thousands and tens of thousands of the loveliest and most pitiable of our fair country-women can tell—to say nothing of the multitudes of our own sex, who read themselves into dandies and coxcombs, and bloods and bullies, by inordinate doses of these mawkish exhibitions of the inspissated juice of poppies, that grow on the banks of Lethe, making people forget everything but what ought not to be remembered. And are not newspaper readers opium-eaters too? We grant that they are, and yet we shall not say a word about the maddening potions of

radicalism, or the bewitching philtres of loyalty, administered by the most notorious of our empirical brethren, lest we should be reminded of the 'sleeping draughts' (opiates with a vengeance), prepared at the office of the 'Iris.' Poets also are opium-eaters, (inveterate ones) in the sentimental acceptation of the term.

"From the first relish in infancy of the pleasures of imagination, to the last pang of heart-breaking disappointment that closes a life of hopes, alternately perishing and regenerated, regenerated only to perish more miserably, and yet be more infatuatedly trusted—he that is 'born a poet' never foregoes the indulgence of that 'fine frenzy' which makes all other enjoyments insipid, and all other sufferings tolerable,—while he rather haunts than inhabits the world of common-sense and commonplace. To his dreams we need not refer—he wakes only to tell them—thrice happy, if 'fit audience he may find, though few,' to hear them."

Favourable notice from such quarters was in itself gratifying; and when the doubt came couched in language of complete respect and appreciation, De Quincey felt called on to make some reply—to give such assurance as was within his scope, that the sketches were genuine narratives, as faithful as they could be made in the circumstances, of what really had occurred to him, and not mere fanciful inventions. He therefore sent to the "London Magazine" this letter, which duly appeared there:—

"Sir,—I have seen in the 'Sheffield Iris' a notice of my two papers, entitled, 'Confessions of an English Opium-Eater.' Notice of any sort from Mr.

Montgomery could not have failed to gratify me, by proving that I had so far succeeded in my efforts, as to catch the attention of a distinguished man of genius; a notice so emphatic as this, and introduced by an exordium of so much beauty as that contained in the two first paragraphs on the faculty of dreaming, I am bound in gratitude to acknowledge as a more flattering expression and memorial of success than any which I had allowed myself to anticipate.

"I am not sorry that a passage in Mr. Montgomery's comments enables me to take notice of a doubt which had reached me before; the passage I mean is this: in the fourth page of the 'Iris,' amongst the remarks with which Mr. Montgomery has introduced the extracts which he has done me the honour to make, it is said: 'Whether this character' (the character in which the opium-eater speaks) 'be real or imaginary, we know not.' The same doubt was reported to me as having been made in another quarter; but, in that instance, as clothed in such discourteous expressions, that I do not think it would have been right for me, or that on a principle of just self-respect I could have brought myself to answer it at all; which I say in no anger, and I hope with no other pride than that which may reasonably influence any man in refusing an answer to all direct impeachments of his veracity. From Mr. Montgomery, however, this scruple on the question of authenticity comes in the shape which might have been anticipated from his own courteous and honourable nature, and implies no more than a suggestion (in one view, perhaps, complimentary to myself) that the whole might be professedly and

intentionally a fictitious case as respected the incidents, and chosen as a more impressive form for communicating some moral or medical admonitions to the confirmed opium-eater. Thus shaped, I cannot have any right to quarrel with this scruple. But on many accounts I should be sorry that such a view were taken of the narrative by those who may happen to read it. And, therefore, I assure Mr. Montgomery, in this public way, that the entire 'Confessions' were designed to convey a narrative of my own experience as an opium-eater, drawn up with entire simplicity and fidelity to the facts, from which they can in no respect have deviated, except by such trifling inaccuracies of date, &c., as the memoranda I have with me in London would not in all cases enable me to reduce to certainty. Over and above the want of these memoranda, I laboured sometimes (as I will acknowledge) under another and a graver embarrassment. To tell nothing *but* the truth must, in all cases, be an unconditional moral law; to tell the *whole* truth is not equally so. In the earlier narrative I acknowledge that I could not always do this; regard of delicacy towards some who are yet living, and of just tenderness to the memory of others who are dead, obliged me, at various points of my narrative, to suppress what would have added interest to the story, and sometimes, perhaps, have left impressions on the reader favourable to other purposes of an autobiographer. In cases which touch too closely on their own rights and interests, all men should hesitate to hurt their own judgment; thus far I imposed a restraint upon myself, as all just and conscientious men would do; in everything else I spoke

fearlessly, and as if writing private memoirs for my own dearest friends. Events, indeed, in my life, connected with so many remembrances of grief, and sometimes of self-reproach, had become too sacred from habitual contemplation to be altered or distorted for the unworthy purposes of scenical effect and display, without violating these feelings of self-respect which all men should cherish, and giving a lasting wound to my conscience.

"Having replied to the question involved in the passage quoted from the 'Iris,' I ought to notice an objection conveyed to me through many channels, and in too friendly terms to have been overlooked, if I had thought it unfounded; whereas, I believe it is a very just one. It is this: that I have so managed the second narrative as to leave an overbalance on the side of the *pleasures* of opium, and that the very horrors themselves, described as connected with the use of opium, do not pass the limit of pleasure. I know not how to excuse myself on this head, unless by alleging (what is obvious enough) that to describe any pains, of any class, and that at perfect leisure for choosing and rejecting thoughts and expressions, is a most difficult task; in my case I scarcely know whether it is competent to me to allege farther, that I was limited both as to space and time, so long as it appears on the face of my paper that I did not turn all that I had of either to the best account. It is known to you, however, that I wrote in extreme haste, and under very depressing circumstances in other respects. On the whole, perhaps, the best way of meeting this objection will be to send you a third part of my 'Confessions,' drawn up with such assist-

ance from fuller memoranda, and the recollections of my only companion during these years, as I shall be able to command on my return to the North. I hope that I shall be able to return thither in the course of next week; and, therefore, by the end of January or thereabouts, I shall have found leisure from my other employments to finish it to my own satisfaction. I do not venture to hope that it will realise the whole of what is felt to be wanting; but it is fit that I should make the effort, if it were only to meet the expressions of interest in my previous papers which have reached me from all quarters, or to mark my sense of the personal kindness which in many cases must have dictated the terms in which that interest was conveyed.

"This, I think, is what I had to say. Some things, which I might have been disposed to add, would not be fitting in a public letter. Let me say, however, generally, that these two papers of mine, short and inconsiderable as they are, have in one way produced a disproportionate result, though but of a personal nature, by leading to many kind acts and generous services and expressions of regard in many different shapes, from men of talents in London.

"To these hereafter I shall look back as to a fund of pleasant remembrances. Meantime, for the present, they have rendered me a service not less acceptable, by making my residence in London, in many respects, agreeable, at a time when, on other accounts, it should naturally have been otherwise.—I remain, sir, your faithful friend and servant, X. Y. Z.

"London, November 27, 1821."

"X. Y. Z." was the signature adopted by De

Quincey for several of his less important contributions to the "London Magazine." This third part of the "Confessions," of which he here gives an indefinite promise, never, however, did appear there.

De Quincey next contributed to the "London Magazine" a series of translations from the German, amongst them a version of Kant's essay on "National Character," also the translated essay on the "Rosicrucians and Freemasonry," and that most characteristic series of "Letters to a Young Man whose Education has been Neglected," in which he really managed to convey a scheme of liberal education relieved by many touches of wit and humour. These letters furnished the occasion for one of Charles Lamb's most lively *jeux d'esprit*—the "Letter to an Old Man whose Education has been Neglected." We find Sir Charles Noon Talfourd making this note:—

"Mr. de Quincey had commenced a series of letters to the 'London Magazine,' 'To a Young Man whose Education has been Neglected,' as a vehicle for conveying miscellaneous information in his admirable style." Upon this hint, Lamb, with the assent which Mr. de Quincey could well afford to give, contributed a parody on the scheme in "A Letter to an Old Gentleman whose Education has been Neglected." And we find Lamb himself writing to Miss Hutchison: "Mr. de Quincey's parody was submitted to him before printed, and had his approbation." Lamb's Essay is to be found among the collected "Eliana," but he prefixed to it, as it appeared in the Magazine, the following letter to the Editor:—

"Dear Sir,—I send you a bantering 'Epistle to

an Old Gentleman whose Education is Supposed to have been Neglected.' Of course, it was *suggested* by some letters of your admirable opium-eater; the discontinuance of which has caused so much regret to myself in common with most of your readers. You will do me injustice by supposing that in the remotest degree it was my intention to ridicule those papers. The fact is, the most serious things may give rise to an innocent burlesque; and the more serious they are, the fitter they become for that purpose. It is not to be supposed that Charles Cotton did not entertain a very high regard for 'Virgil,' notwithstanding he travestied that Poet. Yourself can testify the deep respect I have always held for the profound learning and penetrating genius of our friend. Nothing upon earth would give me greater pleasure than to find that he has not lost sight of his entertaining and instructing purpose.—I am, dear sir, yours and *his*, ELIA."

But the "Letters" were not resumed; the scheme having probably been interrupted by the episode of "Walladmor," in which De Quincey's genius admirably justified itself in the way of practical joke. "Walladmor" was a novel got up in Germany to meet the demand for a new story from the pen of Sir Walter Scott, which that year was not forthcoming for the Easter Fair at Leipsic. De Quincey wrote an article on it in the "London Magazine" soon after its appearance; but, according to his statement, he formed too favourable an opinion of it at a hasty glance; and when asked by the publishers to translate it, he found the task harder than he had bargained for. But he would not be beaten; he

made the German, as he says, only a ground-work, and "darned" it to his own wish. We may well assume, therefore, that there is more of De Quincey in the English version than there is of that German *hoaxer*, bold and inventive as he was. It is a pure parody and caricature of the excessive incident and mystery of "Guy Mannering," with Dirk Hatteraick sputtering Dutch-English, Meg Merrilees, and all; but now and then it becomes mawkish and weak in dialogue. It has very clever passages, and is most amusing when read with a lively eye to the great original.* But perhaps the cleverest portion of it was the "Dedication" to the "German Translator," which De Quincey prefixed to his version. We must make room for it here:—

"Having some intention, sir, of speaking rather freely of you and your German translation, in a postscript to the second volume of my English one, I am shy of sending a presentation copy to Berlin. Neither you nor your publisher might relish all that I may take it into my head to say. Yet, as books sometimes travel far, if you should ever happen to meet with mine knocking about the world, in Germany, I would wish you to know that I have endeavoured to make you what amends I could, for any little affront which I meditate in that postscript, by dedicating my English translation to yourself. You will be surprised to observe that your three corpulent German

* De Quincey himself in after years gave a racy account of the whole affair in "Tait's Magazine"—an article which Messrs. Black have reprinted in the sixteenth or supplementary volume of the "Collected Writings," as from the "London Magazine" of 1824, which internal evidence decisively tells it could not have been.

volumes have collapsed into two English ones of rather consumptive appearance. The English climate, you see, does not agree with them; and they have lost flesh as rapidly as Captain le Harnois, in chapter eighth. We have a story in England, trite enough here, and a sort of philosophic commonplace, like Buridan's ass, but possibly unknown in Germany; and as it is pertinent to the case between us, I will tell it, the more so as it involves a metaphysical question; and such questions, you know, go up from all parts of Europe to you people in Germany, as 'the courts above.' Sir John Cutler had a pair of silk stockings, which his housekeeper, Dolly, darned for a long term of years with worsted; at the end of which time, the last gleam of silk had vanished, and Sir John's *silk* stockings were found to have degenerated into *worsted*. Now, upon this, a question arose among the metaphysicians, whether Sir John's stockings retained (or, if not, at what precise period they lost) their personal identity. The moralists again were anxious to know whether Sir John's stockings could be considered the same 'accountable' stockings from first to last. The lawyers put the same question in another shape, and demanded whether any felony which Sir John's stockings could be supposed to have committed in youth, might legally be the subject of indictment against the same stockings when superannuated; whether a legacy left to the stockings in the first year, could be claimed by them in the last; and whether the worsted stockings could be sued for the debts of the silk stockings. Some such questions will arise, I apprehend, upon your German 'Walladmor' as darned by myself.

But here, my good sir, stop a moment. I must not have you interpret the precedent of Sir John and Dolly too strictly. Sir John's stockings were originally of silk, and darned with worsted; but don't you conceit that to be the case here. No, no! I flatter myself the case between us is just the other way. Your *worsted* stockings it is that I have darned with silk; and the relations which I and Dolly bear to you and Sir John are precisely reversed. What could induce you to dress good St. David in a threadbare suit, it passes my skill to guess—it is enough that I am sure it would give general disgust; and, therefore, I have not only made him a present of a new coat, but have also put a little embroidery upon it. And I really think I shall astonish the good folks in Merionethshire by my account of that saint's festival. In my young days I wandered much in that beautiful shire, and other shires which lie contiguous; and many a kind thing was done to me in poor men's cottages, which, to my dying day, I shall never be able to repay individually. Hence, as occasions offer, I would seek to make my acknowledgments generally to the country. Upon Penmorfa Sands I once had an interesting adventure—and I have accordingly commemorated Penmorfa. To the little town of Machynleth I am indebted for various hospitalities; and I think Machynleth will acknowledge itself indebted to me exclusively for its mayor and corporation. Others there are, besides, in that neighbourhood, both towns and men, that, when they shall read *my* St. David's Day, will hardly know whether they are standing on their head or their heels. As to the Bishop of Bangor, of those same days, I owed his

lordship no particular favour, and, therefore, you will observe, I have now taken my vengeance on that see for ever, by making it do suit and service to the house of Walladmor. But enough of St. David's Day. There are some other little changes which I have been obliged to make, in deference to the taste of this country. In the case of Captain le Harnois, it appeared to me that, from imperfect knowledge of the English language, you have confounded the words 'sailor' and 'tailor;' for you make the captain talk very much like the latter. There is, however, a great deal of difference in the habits of the two animals according to our English naturalists; and, therefore, I have retouched the captain, and curled his whiskers. I have also taken the liberty of curing Miss Walladmor of an hysterical affection. What purpose it answered, I believe you would find it hard to say; and I am sure she has enough to bear without that. Your geography, let me tell you, was none of the best, and I have brushed it up myself. Some things the public will bear; topographical sins are venial in a romance; and no candid people look very sharply after the hydrography of a novel. But still, my dear sir, it *did* strike me, that the case of a man swimming on his back from Bristol to the Isle of Anglesea, was a little beyond the privilege granted by the most *maternal* public. No, pardon me, that rather exceeds the public swallow. Besides, it would have exposed us both to illiberal attacks in the 'Quarterly Review,' from Mr. Barrow of the Admiralty, your weak point being his strong one; and particularly because I had taken liberties with Mr. Croker, who is a colleague and old crony of his.

Your chronology, by the way, was also damaged; but that has gone to the watchmaker's, and it is now regulated, so as to go as well as the Horse Guards. Now, finally, 'mine dear sare,' could you not translate me back into German, and darn me as I have darned you? But you must not 'sweat' me down in the same ratio that I have 'sweated' you; for if you do that, I fear that my dimensions will become invisible to any thick sight in Germany, and I shall present no mark to the critical enemy. Darn me into two portly volumes; and then, perhaps, I will translate you back again into English, and darn you with silk so hyper-lustrous that, were Dolly and Professor Kant to rise from the dead, Dolly should grow jealous of me, and the Professor confess himself more thoroughly puzzled and confounded, as to the matter of personal identity by the final 'Walladmor,' than ever he had been by the Cutlerian stockings. *Jusqu' au revoir*, my dear Principal, hoping you will soon invest me with that character in relation to yourself; and that you will then sign, as it is now *my* turn to sign, your obedient (but not very *faithful*) Translator."

To the "London Magazine" he also contributed articles on *Richter* and *Herder*, with specimens from their works, together with many notes and minor papers.

In spite of all his efforts, however, it would seem that in 1825 he had not been able to extricate himself from debt and difficulty; and that now, even supposing it had been in his power to run North oftener than had been his wont, since he had begun his literary campaign in 1821, he was exiled from

Westmoreland, and compelled to go into a kind of hiding from creditors. In February 1825 we find him writing from London to Professor Wilson, respecting a work on Education by Mr. Hill,* whose brothers were engaged in some school experiment at Hazelwood in Warwickshire:—

"His book has just been reviewed in the last 'Edinburgh Review' (of which some copies have been in town about a week). This service has been done him, I suppose, through some of his political friends—(for he is connected with Brougham, Lord Lansdowne, old Bentham, &c.) But I understand *by* Mr. Jeffrey, how Hill, in common with multitudes in this Babylon who will not put their trust in Blackwood as in God (which, you know he ought to do), yet privately adores him as the devil; and indeed publicly, too, is a great *proneur* of Blackwood. For, in spite of his Jacobinism, he is liberal and inevitably just to real wit. His fear is—that Blackwood may come as Nemesis, and compel him to regorge any puffing and cramming which Tiff has put into his pocket, and is earnest to have a letter addressed in an influential quarter to prevent this. I alleged to him that I am not quite sure but it is an affront to a Professor to presume that he has any connection as contributor, or anything else, to any work which he does not publicly avow as his organ for communicating with the world of letters. He answers that it would be so in him—but that an old friend may write *sub rosâ*. I rejoin that I know

* The work here referred to is, "Plans for the Government and Liberal Instruction of Boys in Large Numbers, drawn from Experience." 8vo. London, 1823.

not but you may have cut Blackwood—even as a subscriber—a whole lustrum ago. He rebuts, by urging a just compliment paid to you as a supposed contributor, in the 'News of Literature and Fashion,' but a moon or two ago. Seriously, I have told him that I know not what was the extent of your connection with Blackwood at *any* time; and that I conceive the labours of your chair in the university must now leave you little leisure for any but occasional contributions, and therefore for no regular cognisance of the work as director, &c. However, as all that he wishes is simply an interference to save him from any very severe article, and not an article in his favour, I have ventured to ask of you if you hear of any such thing, to use such influence as must naturally belong to you in your general character (whether maintaining any connection with Blackwood or not) to get it softened. On the whole, I suppose no such article is likely to appear. But to oblige Hill I make the application. He has no *direct* interest in Hazelwood: he is himself a barrister in considerable practice, and of some standing, I believe; but he takes a strong paternal interest in it, all his brothers (who are accomplished young men, I believe) being engaged in it. They have already had one shock to stand: a certain Mr. Place, a Jacobin friend of the school till just now, having taken the pet with it and removed his son. Now this Place, who was formerly a tailor, leather-breeches maker, and habit-maker, having made a fortune and finished his studies, is become an immense authority as a political and reforming head with Bentham, etc., as also with the 'Westminster

Review,' in which quarter he is supposed to have the weight of nine times ten men; whence, by the way, in the 'circles' of the booksellers, the 'Review' has got the name of the 'Breeches Review.'

"Thus much concerning the occasion of my letter. As to myself—though I have written not as one who labours under much depression of mind—the fact is, I *do* so. At this time calamity presses upon me with a heavy hand; I am quite free of opium, but it has left the liver, which is the Achilles' heel of almost every human fabric, subject to affections which are tremendous for the weight of wretchedness attached to them. To fence with these with the one hand, and with the other to maintain the war with the wretched business of hack-author, with all its horrible degradations, is more than I am able to bear. At this moment I have not a place to hide my head in. Something I meditate—I know not what. 'Itaque e conspectu omnium abiit.' With a good publisher, and liberty to premeditate what I write, I might yet liberate myself: after which, having paid everybody, I would slink into some dark corner—educate my children—and show my face in the world no more.

"If you should ever have occasion to write to me, it will be best to address your letter either to the care of Mrs. de Quincey, Rydal Nab, Westmoreland (Fox Ghyll * is sold, and will be given up in a few days), or to the care of M. D. Hill, Esq., 11 King's

* Fox Ghyll was a little cottage which, owing to the increase of family and of books, Mr. de Quincey had sometime before taken on lease. Rydal Nab, as has already been said, was the residence of his wife's father, where she then was.

Bench Walk, Temple; but, for the present, I think rather to the latter, for else suspicions will arise that I am in Westmoreland, which, if I were not, might be serviceable to me; but—if, as I am in hopes of accomplishing sooner or later, I should be—might defeat my purpose."

Mrs. Gordon adds the following note to this letter with regard to the statement contained in it that he "was free of opium:"—"To the last he asserted this; but the habit, though modified, was never abandoned." She is wrong as to his assertions: he positively tells, with iteration, that though he had frequently fancied himself free of the habit, it reasserted its power over him up to a certain extent. It is abundantly clear that Mrs. Gordon wrote without reading the final edition of the "Confessions," which, considering everything, she should have done.

Another very important friendship of this London period was that formed with Charles Knight, who was then engaged with his "Quarterly Magazine." He asked De Quincey to write; and several of his articles and translations from the German appeared in it. In his "Passages of a Working Life," Mr. Knight gives a pretty full, though unfortunately a somewhat disconnected, account of their intercourse, which was close and intimate. De Quincey during some months resided in Mr. Knight's house in Pall Mall, East. Mr. Knight says:—

"In July 1824 I had become acquainted with Mr. de Quincey, and he had contributed to the 'Quarterly Magazine' a slight translation from the German, though as to the strict fidelity of the translation I might have

had considerable doubts. He could not go about this sort of work without improving all he touched."

Mr. Knight describes a visit which he had paid to De Quincey at his lodging, whilst he was in the toils with "Walladmor," and we have this reminiscence:—"I saw him groaning over his uncongenial labour, by which he eventually got very little. It was projected to appear in three volumes. He despairingly wrote to me, 'After weeding out the forests of rubbish, I believe it will make only one decent volume.'"

Mr. Knight thus notes some characteristics, and illustrates them by incidents:—

"Vast as were his acquirements, intuitive as was his appreciation of character and the motives of human actions, unembarrassed as was his demeanour, pleasant and even mirthful his table-talk, De Quincey was as helpless in every position of responsibility as when he paced 'stony-hearted Oxford Street' looking for the lost one. He was constantly beset by idle fears and vain imaginings. His sensitiveness was so extreme, in combination with the almost ultra-courtesy of a gentleman, that he hesitated to trouble a servant with any personal requests without a long prefatory apology. My family were in the country in the summer of 1825, when he was staying at my house in Pall Mall, East. A friend or two had met him at dinner, and I had walked part of the way home with one of them. When I returned, I tapped at his chamber door to bid him good-night. He was sitting at the open window habited as a prize-fighter when he enters the ring. 'You will take cold,' I exclaimed. 'Where is your shirt?' 'I have not a shirt—my shirts are unwashed.' 'But why not

tell the servant to send them to the laundress?' 'Ah! how could I presume to do that in Mrs. Knight's absence?'

"One more illustration of the eccentricity of De Quincey. I had been to Windsor; on my return I was told that Mr. de Quincey had taken his box away, leaving word that he was gone home. I knew that he was waiting for a remittance from his mother, which would satisfy some clamorous creditors, and enable him to rejoin his family at Grasmere. Two or three days after, I heard that he was still in town. I obtained a clue to his lodging, and found him in a miserable place on the Surrey side of Waterloo Bridge. He had received a large draft on a London banker at twenty-one days' sight. He summoned courage to go to Lombard Street, and was astonished to learn that he could not obtain the amount till the draft became due. A man of less sensitive feelings would have returned to Pall Mall, East, and have there waited securely and comfortably till I came. How to frame his apology to our trusty domestic was the difficulty that sent him into the den where I found him. He produced the draft to me from out of his Bible, which he thought was the best hiding-place. 'Come to me to-morrow morning and I will give you the cash.' 'What? How? Can such a thing be possible? Can the amount be got before the draft is due?' 'Never fear; come you, and then get home as fast as you can.' . . .

"We were all truly sorry to part with this valued friend, whose eccentricity made him even more dear to us—whose helplessness under the direst pressure of want of means brought no feeling of contempt, for his

abilities and learning commanded our reverence. We scarcely knew then what he had to endure during his London sojourn."

It is very easy to foresee that a nature such as this would find itself in very odd and exceptional positions on the way through the world,—positions apt to be misunderstood, and often made to bear a sinister aspect by the vulgar-minded.

In the end of 1825 he wrote to Mr. Knight from Westmoreland:—"Anxiety, long continued with me of late years, in consequence of my opium-shattering, seizes on some frail part about the stomach, and produces a specific complaint which very soon abolishes all power of thinking at all."

Recalling the fascination of his talk at that time, Mr. Knight, in opposition to some remark to the same effect as that which we have quoted from a report of the Taylor & Hessey banquets, writes thus:—

"'Oh, for one hour of Dundee!'—one hour of De Quincey! Better three hours, from nine till midnight, for a rapt listener to be 'under the wand of the magician,' spellbound by his wonderful affluence of talk, such as that of the fairy whose lips dropped rubies and diamonds. Many a night have I, with my wife by my side, sat listening to the equable flow of his discourse, both of us utterly forgetting the usual regularity of our habits, and hearing the drowsy watchman's 'past one o'clock' (for the old watchman then walked his round), before we parted."

Mr. Knight further enlightens us as to later intercourse.

"I occasionally had a warm-hearted letter from him,

but our correspondence after a year or two ceased. I was delighted at its renewal in July 1829, when he wrote me the most pressing invitation from Mrs. de Quincey and himself to come with my wife and children to visit them. In this letter he says:—'And now, my friend, think what a glorious Eldorado of milk and butter, and cream-cheeses, and all other dairy products, supposing that you like those things, I can offer you morning, noon, and night. You may absolutely bathe in new milk, or even in cream; and you *shall* bathe, if you like it. I know that you care not much about the luxuries of the dinner-table; else, though our luxuries are few and simple, I could offer you some temptations—mountain lamb equal to Welsh; char famous to the antipodes; trout and pike from the very lake within twenty-five feet of our door; bread, such as you have never presumed to dream of, made of our own wheat, not doctored and separated by the usual miller's process into fine insipid flour and coarse, that is, merely dirty-looking white, but all ground down together, which is the sole receipt (*experto crede*) for having rich, lustrous, red-brown ambrosial bread; new potatoes of celestial earthiness and raciness, which with us last to October; and finally, milk, milk, milk—cream, cream, cream (hear it, thou benighted Londoner!), in which you must and shall bathe."

Among the other notable personages he met in London at this period, was "Walking Stewart," whom he has fitly celebrated. With his excessive abstinence, his hatred of reading, his systematic attention to hours and to exercise; above all, with his expressive dislike to religion generally, and

to the Christian religion in particular, Walking Stewart could not but have frequently offended De Quincey with his outbursts. In fact, there was unmistakably a vein of madness in the man. Yet De Quincey, with complete tolerance, writes of him:—

"His books are filled with extravagances on all subjects; and to religious people they are especially revolting, by the uniform spirit of contempt which he manifests for all creeds alike—Christian, Mahometan, Buddhist, Pagan. In fact, he was as deliberate and resolute an atheist as can ever have existed; but for all that, and though wishing, for his own sake, that he had been a more religious man, or at least had felt a greater reverence for such subjects, and a closer sympathy with that which, for so vast a majority of the human race, must ever constitute their sole consolation under sorrow and calamity: still I could not close my eyes to the many evidences which his writings and his conversation afforded of a true grandeur of mind, and of a calm, Spinozistic state of contemplative reverie. In fact, he was half-crazy; but his mind, like a shell taken from the sea, still echoed and murmured to the multitudinous sounds and forms amongst which his former years had been passed."

Physiognomic, truly, is De Quincey's love of the crazy Walking Stewart. One of Stewart's whims was that, as his philosophy would not be appreciated while he lived, he should have copies of his works buried with him, to await the time when the world should be prepared for the revelation! De Quincey drew from his contact with Walking Stewart convictions

which enabled him to deny the truth of the assertion of Wordsworth and Coleridge, that mad people are, invariably, dull and miserable companions. He humoured Stewart, and found him a rich study—a queer but a delightful fellow to pass the time with —sprightly, and open to many kinds of impressions, in spite of his madness. De Quincey's contact with the "madman" brings out his sympathetic qualities and his tact in a very convincing manner. A mere student, or a man without humour, would have quarrelled with Stewart, or become disgusted at him, within an hour.

That De Quincey's fame was rapidly growing, is proved by various circumstances—more particularly the demands made upon him by editors here and there. Another evidence, though perhaps not quite so convincing a one, he was somewhat inconsistently introduced as an interlocutor in the "Noctes Ambrosianæ" by Wilson, who, however, never succeeded in catching but the faintest echo of De Quincey's manner of talking. Here is part of a dialogue from "Maga," for October 1823, before the talk about the opium confessions had died down:—

"*North.* My dear late English Opium-Eater, this is an unexpected, unhoped-for happiness. I thought you had been in Constantinople.

"*The Opium-Eater.* You had no reason whatever for any such thought. No doubt I *might* have been at Constantinople—and I wish I had been—but I have not been; and I am of opinion that you have not been there since we last parted, any more than myself. Have you, sir?

"*The Shepherd.* I dinna ken, sir, where you hae

been; but, heeh, sirs, yon bit opium tract 's a desperate interesting confession. It's perfectly dreadfu', yon pouring in upon you o' Oriental eemagery. But nae wunner. Sax thousand draps o' lowdnam! It's as muckle, I fancy, as a bottle of whusky. I tried the experiment mysel', after reading the wee, wud, wicked wark, wi' five hunner draps, and I couped ower and continued in ae snore frae Monday night till Friday morning. But I had naething tae confess; naething at least that wad gang into words; for it was a week-lang, dull, dim dwawm o' the mind, with a kind o' soun' bummin i' my lugs; and clouds, clouds, clouds hovering round and round; and things o' sight no made for the sight; and an awfu' smell like the rotten sea; and a confusion between the right hand and the left; and events o' auld lang syne, like the torments o' the present hour, wi' naething to mark onything by; and doubts o' being quick or dead; and something rouch, rouch, like the fleece o' a ram, and motion as of an everlasting earthquake; and nae remembrance o' my ain Christian name; and a dismal thought that I was converted into a quadruped cretur, wi' four feet; and a sair drouth, aye sook, sookin' awa' at empty win'; and the lift doukin' doun to smore me; and the moon within half a yard o' my nose; but no just like the moon either. O Lord, save us! I'm a' grewin' to think o't; but how could I CONFESS? for the sounds and the sights were baith shadows; and where are the words for expressing the distraction o' the immaterial sowl droonin' in matter, and warstling wi' unknown powers to get ance mair a steady footin' on the greensward o' the waking world?"

And again, in October 1825, we find in the "Noctes" what sounds like an over-celebration of De Quincey's success as a contributor to the "London Magazine;" but it loses in effect from a too direct purpose to disparage De Quincey's colleagues on that journal. However, here it is; it is certainly spirited and Wilson-esque enough, if it is nothing else; and suffices to show that Wilson, the more intimately he came to know De Quincey, held the higher opinion of him both as a writer and as a man:—

"*O'Doherty.* You would disapprove, I suppose, of the attack on Mr. de Quincey in the 'John Bull Magazine'?

"*North.* Disapprove? I utterly despised it, and so, no doubt, did he. They say he is no scholar, because he has never published any verbal criticisms on any Greek authors. What stuff! Then, I take it, the best *scholars* in the world are such creatures as Dr. Parr—rubbish that I honestly confess I never used to think any sensible man would condescend to class much higher than a Petralogist, or a"——

"*North.* Macaulay and Praed have written very good prize poems. These two young gentlemen ought to make a figure in the world. By the way, you would be glad to see, Tickler, that 'Knight's Quarterly Magazine' is *rediviva?*

"*Tickler.* I was so. May it flourish! It is an able and elegant miscellany. Methinks I see the opium-eater in last number. Having now connected himself with gentlemen, may his career be bright and prosperous, for he is a man of a million.

"*North.* His original genius and consummate scholarship speedily effected the damnation of Taylor and Hessey's magazine, according to my prophecy. All the other contributors looked such ninnies beside him, that the public burst out a laughing in the poor magazine's face. Then one and all of them began mimicking our friend, and pretended to be opium-eaters. Now, the effect of the poppy upon the puppy is most offensive to the bystanders, and need not be described. . . . Taylor & Hessey, hearing the 'din of battle bray,' fled from the field."

In the end of 1825, whilst De Quincey still remained in Westmoreland, we find Professor Wilson addressing to him the following letter:—

GLOUCESTER PLACE, EDINBURGH,
November 12*th*, 1825.

MY DEAR PLATO,—Mrs. Wilson is in good health. I am most anxiously expecting your communications; without them JANUS will be afraid to look the public in the face. Do, I earnestly beseech you, send me *as much as you can*, and if possible without delay. I am not without hope that your lucubrations may at this moment be crossing the Border. The press is stopped, and I cannot think of sending to it bad or indifferent articles till I am forced to prove that your effectual aid is not to be given in this extremity. I am naturally anxious about the volume, because, if an annual, it can yield you fifty guineas (and myself), without interference with any other more important objects. I shall not proceed till I hear from you; and a few days more, say a week, must be allowed, rather than lose your contributions.

I wish earnestly that you would read Brown and Welsh as soon as you can. I have undertaken to write a review of the lectures for the first number of the "Quarterly," edited by Lockhart; and with your assistance (to be acknowledged in the way of business, and felt in the way of friendship) a creditable article may surely be composed. Lockhart's dynasty begins

with the resignation of John Coleridge, after next number, and he is naturally anxious about his *debut*.

There seem to be several distinct topics for a review of Brown: first, the introductory lectures, containing his view of the mode of studying the human mind, which seemed to me ingenious, and perhaps true, although, to your more instructed intelligence, they may seem otherwise. Secondly, his distribution of the subject generally into sensations, notions, and feelings of relation. I now speak vaguely; but there he conceives his chief merit and decided originality to lie: it is his system. Thirdly, what is his theory of the moral feeling or faculty? Many other subjects there are discussed by him; but on these three especially would I wish to have your matured and reasoned opinion. Of course I shall be happy to have your opinion on any other or every other part of his philosophy.

I need not say to you that a certain moderated tone must be assumed by every writer in the "Quarterly." You know what that is, and how to strike that tone on a different instrument from that generally sounded. I have begun to write upon the work; and should you think it safe to assist me, and to confide your views to such hands, I do not despair of being able to interweave them with my own in a way not unsatisfactory to your mind. Of course the whole article would be submitted to you before publication. Should you tell me that you will engage in this, I will write you a fuller letter without loss of time.

Lockhart will doubtless for some time—perhaps always—be somewhat fettered in his will, but I know how happy he will be to have your assistance. He knows your great talents, and will, I know, act in the most gentlemanly spirit to all contributors. A noble review of Kant would, in good time, be valuable to him and you; and, master as you are of German literature and philosophy, I do indeed hope that you may become a contributor. I have engaged to do all I can in my narrower department. John Paul should certainly now have justice done him; and he is a writer respecting whom it is not likely any difference of opinion should exist between you and Lockhart.

It will make me truly happy to hear from you as often as the spirit moves you. Thank God you are not now domineered

over by circumstances, and may your noble nature never more be disturbed but by its own workings!

I begin now to believe that you are a political economist. Would that Ricardo had not been a Jew.

Hartley Coleridge has given me some very good things for JANUS. But do not damn his godship.

I hope Mrs. de Quincey is well, and that your handsome boy is about to lay down his crutches. I write you in a garret overlooking a thousand smoky chimneys, but there is a blue sky and a gleam of the sea. The watery whirlwinds on Rydalmere must have been in full feather during these high blasts.

Do not be teased with my importunities, but attribute them partly to selfish and partly to friendly motives.—I am, my dear De Quincey, your most sincere friend,

JOHN WILSON.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STRUGGLE MAINTAINED.

THE position in which De Quincey found himself at the beginning of 1826 almost overpowered him. "It seemed to him," he said, "as though the sunlight would never visit him again: as though he could creep into any unvisited and unblessed cellar, and never see the face of friend or foe any more." He had returned to London; and the sense of exile from his Westmoreland cottage, and from his children, chilled his energies and cramped his powers of production. Wilson had said seriously that, if De Quincey owed a £5 note and were unable to pay it, it would vex him more than debts of thousands would vex many other men rolling about in their carriages. He was likely, therefore, to sympathise with the deep depression of De Quincey's letters, and to do what he could to remove the cause. He was able to send a response that relieved the gloom; it was an offer of such a sum for a series of articles for "Blackwood," as would in the meantime mitigate matters, and so far set De Quincey's mind free to write. The result

was the publication in "Maga" of that valuable series of papers titled the "Gallery of the German Prose Writers," which was opened in the number for November 1826 with the article on Lessing. This was followed in February 1827 by one on the "Last Days of Kant," and later by others. He was enabled, by this timely engagement, and by slight contributions which he continued to make to the "London Magazine" and other journals, to maintain his Westmoreland cottage. For the next two years, the best products of his pen went into the pages of "Maga." The most conspicuous of these contributions were "Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts," which appeared in the end of 1827; and "The Toilette of the Hebrew Lady" in 1828.

This connection with Edinburgh led him seriously to think of another effort at settlement there. He accordingly went to Edinburgh in the end of 1828, to occupy Wilson's rooms for a short time whilst he was at Elleray. It was at this time that De Quincey wrote the bulk of the articles which appeared in 1828, 1829, and 1830 in the "Edinburgh Literary Gazette," from one of which Mrs. Gordon, in her life of her father, has made lengthened extracts. At this time, too, he entered into a new engagement with Blackwood. Whether he had been influenced by a long letter written by Miss Wordsworth for Mrs. de Quincey, his decision was in conformity with advice tendered, as will be seen from the following extracts:—

RYDAL MOUNT, *Thursday, November 16th.*

MY DEAR SIR,—A letter of good tidings respecting Mrs. de Quincey and your family cannot, I am sure, be unwelcome; and besides, she assures me that you will be glad to hear of my

safe return to Rydal after a nine months' absence. I called at your cottage yesterday, having first seen your son William at the head of the schoolboys,—as it might seem a leader of their noontide games ; and Horace among the tribe, both as healthy-looking as the best, and William very much grown. Margaret was in the kitchen, preparing to follow her brothers to school, and I was pleased to see her also looking stout and well, and much grown. Mrs. de Quincey was seated by the fire above-stairs with her baby on her knee. She rose and received me cheerfully, as a person in perfect health, and does indeed seem to have had an extraordinary recovery, and as little suffering as could be expected. The babe looks as if it would thrive, and is what we call a nice child. . . . . .

Mrs. de Quincey seemed on the whole in very good spirits, but, with something of sadness in her manner, she told me you were not likely very soon to be at home. She then said that you had at present some literary employments at Edinburgh, and had, besides, had an offer (or something to this effect) of a permanent engagement, the nature of which she did not know, but that you hesitated about accepting it, as it might necessitate you to settle in Edinburgh. To this I replied, "Why not settle there, for the time, at least, that this engagement lasts? Lodgings are cheap at Edinburgh, and provisions and coals not dear. Of these facts I had some weeks' experience four years ago." I then added that it was my firm opinion that you could never regularly keep up to your engagements at a distance from the press, and said I, "Pray tell him so when you write." She replied, "Do write yourself." Now I could not refuse to give her pleasure by so doing, especially being assured that my letter would not be wholly worthless to you, having such agreeable news to send of your family.

. . . . . .

I do not presume to take the liberty of advising the acceptance of this engagement or of that, only I would venture to request you well to consider the many impediments to literary employments to be regularly carried on in limited time at a distance from the press in a small house and in perfect solitude. You must well know that it is a true and faithful concern for your interests and those of your family that prompts me to call your attention to this point ; and if you think that

I am mistaken, you will not, I am sure, take it ill that I have thus freely expressed my opinion.

It gave me great pleasure to hear of your good health and spirits, and you, I am sure, will be glad to have good accounts of all our family, except poor Dora, who has been very ill, indeed,—dangerously ill; but now, thank God, she is gaining ground, I hope, daily. Her extreme illness was during my absence, and I was, therefore, spared great anxiety, for I did not know of it till she was convalescent. I was, however, greatly shocked by her sickly looks. They improve, however, visibly, and she gains strength and has a good appetite. Whenever weather permits she rides on horseback. My brother's eyes are literally quite well. This surely is a great blessing, and I hope we are sufficiently thankful for it. He reads aloud to us by candlelight, and uses the pen for himself. My poor sister is a little worn by anxiety for Dora, but in other respects looks as well as usual. . . . . .

I cannot express how happy I am to find myself at home again after so long an absence, though my time has passed very agreeably, and my health been excellent. I have had many very long walks since my return, and am more than ever charmed with our rocks and mountains. Rich autumnal tints, with an intermixture of green ones, still linger on the trees.

My brother and sister do not know of my writing, otherwise they would send their remembrances.

Make my respects to Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Wilson; and believe me, dear sir, yours affectionately,

D. Wordsworth.

P.S.—Excuse a very bad pen and haste.

1 *o'clock, Thursday.*—I have been at Grasmere, and again seen your wife. She desires me to say that she is particularly anxious to hear from you on her father's account. The newspaper continues to come directed to my brother, though, sometime since, my brother wrote to request that it might not. The new editor, no doubt, however, wished to continue the connection with you; but we think that it would be much better that Mrs. de Quincey should write to order it not to be sent, at least until your return to Grasmere, especially as at present you are not likely to contribute anything to the paper. She agrees with me in thinking it right so to do, and

will write to the editor unless you order to the contrary. Perhaps you will write yourself. Pray mention this matter when you next write to her.

. . . . . .

These arrangements it was, probably, that led him shortly after this to bring his elder children, William and Margaret, to Edinburgh for the sake of superior education. They were taken under charge for a time by Captain Hamilton (Cyril Thornton) and his wife, who were unremitting in their kindness and attention.

Though in many points De Quincey's habits and feelings were far removed from those of ordinary men, his love for his children was close and tender. They were always in his thoughts; and what added the sharpest sting, when he recalled lost chances and possibilities thrown away, was the consciousness that they might suffer. The thought of them, and of possible privations for them, braced him up to new efforts when he might have helplessly succumbed. After a certain age, as we shall learn by and by, he was the sole tutor his sons ever had.

Mr. Thomas Carlyle, with that generous interest in what is original and excellent which has so honourably distinguished him throughout his long career, had, in common with many others, asked after the "Opium-eater" whose contributions had drawn so much attention to the "London Magazine," and had met him, while he was on visits to Edinburgh, at the houses of Mr. John Gordon and others. Hearing that De Quincey had come to Edinburgh at this time, Mr. Carlyle addressed to him the following very friendly letter, which we are gratified to have his

permission to print in this place; and our readers, we are sure, will agree with us that it would have been a public loss had this letter fallen irrecoverably aside:—

CRAIGENPUTTOCH, 11*th December* 1828.

MY DEAR SIR,—Having the opportunity of a frank, I cannot resist the temptation to send you a few lines, were it only to signify that two well-wishers of yours are still alive in these remote moors, and often thinking of you with the old friendly feelings. My wife encourages me in this innocent purpose: she has learned lately that you were inquiring for her of some female friend; nay, even promising to visit us here—a fact of the most interesting sort to both of us. I am to say, therefore, that your presence at this fireside will diffuse no ordinary gladness over all members of the household; that our warmest welcome, and such solacements as even the desert does not refuse, are at any time and at all times in store for one we love so well. Neither is this expedition so impracticable. We lie but a short way out of your direct route to Westmoreland; communicate by gravelled roads with Dumfries and other places in the habitable globe. Were you to warn us of your approach, it might all be made easy enough. And then such a treat it would be to hear the sound of philosophy and literature in the hitherto quite savage wolds, where since the creation of the world no such music, scarcely even articulate speech, had been uttered or dreamed of! Come, therefore, come and see us; for we often long after you. Nay, I can promise, too, that we are almost a unique sight in the British Empire; such a quantity of German periodicals and mystic speculation embossomed in plain Scottish *Peat-moor* being nowhere else that I know of to be met with.

In idle hours we sometimes project founding a sort of colony here, to be called the "Misanthropic Society;" the settlers all to be men of a certain philosophic depth, and intensely sensible of the present state of literature; each to have his own cottage, encircled with roses or thistles as he might prefer; a library and pantry within, and huge stack of turf-fuel without; fenced off from his neighbours by fir woods, and, when he pleased, by cast-metal railing, so that each might feel himself strictly an

individual, and free as a son of the wilderness; but the whole settlement to meet weekly over coffee, and there unite in their *Miserere*, or what were better, hurl forth their defiance, pity, expostulation, over the whole universe, civil, literary, and religious. I reckon this place a much fitter site for such an establishment than your Lake Country—a region abounding in natural beauty, but blown on by coach-horns, betrodden by picturesque tourists, and otherwise exceedingly desecrated by too frequent resort; whereas here, though still in communication with the manufacturing world, we have a solitude altogether Druidical—grim hills tenanted chiefly by the wild grouse, tarns and brooks that have soaked and slumbered unmolested since the Deluge of Noah, and nothing to disturb you with speech, except Arcturus and Orion, and the Spirit of Nature, in the heaven and in the earth, as it manifests itself in anger or love, and utters its inexplicable tidings, unheard by the mortal ear. But the misery is the almost total want of colonists! Would *you* come hither and be king over us; *then* indeed we had made a fair beginning, and the "Bog School" might snap its fingers at the "Lake School" itself, and hope to be one day recognised of all men.

But enough of this fooling. Better were it to tell you in plain prose what little can be said of my own welfare, and inquire in the same dialect after yours. It will gratify you to learn that here, in the desert, as in the crowded city, I am moderately active and well; better in health, not worse; and though active only on the small scale, yet in my own opinion honestly, and to as much result as has been usual with me at any time. We have horses to ride on, gardens to cultivate, tight walls and strong fires to defend us against winter; books to read, paper to scribble on; and no man or thing, at least in this visible earth, to make us afraid; for I reckon that so securely sequestered are we, not only would no Catholic rebellion, but even no new Hengist and Horsa invasion, in anywise disturb our tranquillity. True, we have no society; but who has, in the strict sense of that word? I have never had any worth speaking much about since I came into this world: in the next, it may be, they will order matters better. Meanwhile, if we have not the *wheat* in great quantity, we are nearly altogether free from the *chaff*, which often in this matter is highly annoying to weak nerves. My wife and I are busy learn-

ing Spanish; far advanced in *Don Quixote* already. I purpose writing mystical *Reviews* for somewhat more than a twelvemouth to come; have Greek to read, and the whole universe to study (for I understand less and less of it); so that here as well as elsewhere I find that a man may "*dree his wierd*" (serve out his earthly apprenticeship) with reasonable composure, and wait what the flight of years may bring him. little disappointed (unless he is a fool) if it bring him mere *nothing* save what he has already—a body and a soul—more cunning and costly treasures than all Golconda and Potosi could purchase for him. What would the vain worm, man, be at? Has he not a head, to speak of nothing else—a head (be it *with* a hat or without one) full of far richer things than Windsor Palace, or the Brighton Teapot added to it? What are all Dresden picture-galleries and magazines *des arts et des métiers* to the strange painting and thrice wonderful and thrice precious workmanship that goes on under the cranium of a beggar? What *can* be added to him or taken from him by the hatred or love of all men? The grey paper or the white silk paper in which the gold ingot is wrapped; the gold is inalienable; *he* is the gold. But truce also to this moralising. I had a thousand things to ask concerning you: your employments, purposes, sufferings, and pleasures. Will you not write to me? will you not come to me and tell? Believe it, you are well loved here, and none feels better than I what a spirit is for the present eclipsed in clouds. For the present it can only be; time and chance are for all men; that troublous season will end; and one day with more joyful, not deeper or truer regard, I shall see you "yourself again." Meanwhile, pardon me this intrusion; and write, if you have a vacant hour which you would fill with a good action. Mr. Jeffery is still anxious to know you; has he ever succeeded? We are not to be in Edinburgh, I believe, till spring; but I will send him a letter to you (with your permission) by the first conveyance. Remember me with best regards to Professor Wilson and Sir W. Hamilton, neither of whom must forget me; not omitting the honest Gordon, who I know will not.

The bearer of this letter is Henry Inglis, a young gentleman of no ordinary talent and worth, in whom, as I believe, *es steckt gar viel*. Should he call himself, pray let this be an introduction, for he reverences all spiritual worth, and you also will

learn to love him.—With all friendly sentiments, I am ever, my dear sir, most faithfully yours,

T. Carlyle.

Besides the contributions to the "Literary Gazette" already named, De Quincey wrote for "Blackwood," about this time, the more important essay titled, "Dr. Parr and his Contemporaries; or, Whiggism in its Relations to Literature," one of his most thoughtful, original, and finished productions. He never returned to Grasmere, for in 1830 he was joined in Edinburgh by Mrs. de Quincey and the younger children. To a man of De Quincey's sensitive and brooding temperament, to whom places inevitably became closely associated with the memories of joy and sorrow, it might well befall that Westmoreland was no longer fitted to be the pleasant home it had been. Friends had passed; and the solitude which he had often sought now became over-populous with ghostly presences. Other considerations, too, which had once been all-powerful in favour of the Westmoreland domicile and headquarters, had now in some measure ceased to have force. Mrs. de Quincey, it may be, had clung to her native vale for reasons other than mere sentimental love of it; she was near to her father and family, for one thing; and, when weighing the advantages and disadvantages of separation, at the time her husband set forth for London, she may have come to the conclusion that for the sake of the children Westmoreland was at least more healthy than London could be; whereas, a removal of all the family there might only have the effect of hampering and tying her husband to a poverty-stricken, squalid

locality. Staying where she was, at cost of much anxiety and self-denial, would serve two purposes—keep the children in the sweet country air, and preserve a corner to which her husband could retire for rest and change as often as his engagements would allow. But such considerations as had weighed against a transfer of the family to London ceased to have force in favour of the maintenance of the Westmoreland home—much prized as it had been through a lifetime—when a settlement had been made in Edinburgh. Some of his earlier friends there had already passed away, or had removed to other places; but there was Wilson in the height of his fame, and the circle which he had gathered round him had grown. There could be no lack of society; De Quincey was likely to have more of it than he would either seek or enjoy. The Cottage at Town-end, however, was not formally relinquished till some time after this.

With "Tait's Magazine," which had been started in Edinburgh as a kind of Whig or Liberal opponent of "Blackwood," De Quincey had formed a connection which proved profitable to him in several ways. Though committed politically, the publisher was willing to hold literature, so far, an open field, and to allow considerable latitude in that department to the expression of personal opinion. It was in the pages of "Tait," for the next fifteen years, that some of his best and most interesting, if less finished, writings found a place. It was at this time, too, that he wrote the greater portion of the story "Klosterheim," which was published by the Messrs. Blackwood as an independent volume

in 1832, the only thing in the shape of a novel which De Quincey ever attempted, or at all events ever gave to the world avowedly as such.

The scene of "Klosterheim" is laid in Germany in the time of the Thirty Years' War, when the inrush of the Swedes had disturbed all the ordinary relations; when numbers of freebooters found ample verge for their predatory propensities; and minor princes were betrayed into sympathy with the foreigners. Some of these freebooters were actually encouraged by the Swedes for their own purposes, and on this point some details of the plot of "Klosterheim" depend. Klosterheim is a university city, the seat of the Landgrave of X——, who rules his principality more by terror than by anything else, having called to his aid a crafty Italian, Luigi Adorni, by whom he is assisted in underhand wiles to outwit the Imperial power. This man, who covered a temperament of terrific violence with a masque of dissimulation and the most icy reserve, met with no opposition, unless it were occasionally from Father Anselm, the Confessor. He delighted in the refinements of intrigue, and in the most tortuous labyrinths of political manœuvring, purely for their own sakes; and sometimes defeated his own purposes by mere superfluity of diplomatic subtlety, which hardly, however, won a momentary concern from him in the pleasure he experienced at having found an undeniable occasion for equal subtlety, in unweaving his own webs of deception.

At the time the story opens, the Klosterheimers are in great excitement concerning the safety of a band of their fellow-citizens, who are coming from Vienna

under armed escort. They know that a military robber of ill-repute—Holkerstein—will use all his art to waylay and to entrap them. In this caravan is the Lady Paulina, said to be a natural daughter of the Emperor; and at a certain point, when the caravan has encamped by the forest, they are joined by "Friends from Klosterheim," being "a chosen band of volunteers, on whose fidelity they might entirely depend," to strengthen their escort. Amongst them is "a young cavalier, magnificent alike in his person, dress, and style of his appointments. He was superbly mounted, wore the decorations of a major-general in the Imperial service, and scarcely needed the explanations which he gave to exonerate himself from the suspicion of being a leader of robbers under Holkerstein."

This same young officer, Maximilian, had been known ever since his student days to have espoused the cause of the Emperor against that of the Landgrave who, as next heir, had succeeded to a prince greatly beloved, but was himself hated for his cruelty, and the gloomy austerity of his character. This young officer is now joyously received by Paulina as "Dearest Maximilian," for she had no hope of meeting him there. At the chateau of Falkenberg, some eighteen miles from Klosterheim, where they rested, Maximilian, after having conversed with Paulina, and seen her safely to her room for the night, also retired. This is a fair specimen of De Quincey's narrative style:—

"The particular room which he selected for his purpose, on account of its small size, and its warm appearance in other respects, was furnished under

foot with layers of heavy Turkey carpets, one laid upon another (according to a fashion then prevalent in Germany), and on the walls with tapestry. In this mode of hanging rooms, though sometimes heavy and sombre, there was a warmth sensible and apparent as well as real, which peculiarly fitted it for winter apartments, and a massy splendour which accorded with the style of dress and furniture in that gorgeous age. One real disadvantage, however, it had as often employed: it gave a ready concealment to intruders with evil intentions; and under the protecting screen of tapestry many a secret had been discovered; many robberies facilitated; and some celebrated murderers had been sheltered, with circumstances of mystery that for ever baffled investigation.

"Maximilian smiled as the sight of the hangings, with their rich colours glowing in the fire-light, brought back to his remembrance one of those tales which in the preceding winter had made a great noise in Vienna. With a soldier's carelessness, he thought lightly of all dangers that could arise within four walls; and, having extinguished the lights which burned upon a table, he unbuckled his sabre, and threw himself upon a sofa which he drew near to the fire; and then enveloping himself in a large horseman's cloak, he courted the approach of sleep. The fatigues of the day, and of the preceding night, had made this in some measure needful to him. But weariness is not always the best preface to repose; and the irritation of many busy anxieties continued for some time to keep him in a most uneasy state of vigilance. As he lay, he could see on one side the

fantastic figures in the fire composed of wood and turf; on the other side, looking to the tapestry, he saw the wild forms and the *melée*, little less fantastic, of human and brute features in a chase—a boar chase in front, and a stag chase on his left hand. These, as they rose fitfully in bright masses of colour and of savage expression under the lambent flashing of the fire, continued to excite his irritable state of feeling; and it was not for some time that he felt this uneasy condition give way to exhaustion. He was at length on the very point of falling asleep, or perhaps had already fallen into its very lightest and earliest stage, when the echo of a distant door awoke him. He had some slight impression that a noise in his own room had concurred with the other and more distant one to awake him. But, after raising himself for a moment on his elbow and listening, he again resigned himself to sleep.

"Again, however, and probably before he had slept a minute, he was roused by a double disturbance. A low rustling was heard in some part of the room, and a heavy foot upon a neighbouring staircase. Roused at length to the prudence of paying some attention to sounds so stealthy, in a situation beset with dangers, he rose and threw open the door. A corridor, which ran round the head of the staircase, was lit up with a brilliant light; and he could command from this station one flight of the stairs. On these he saw nothing; all was now wrapt in a soft effulgence of light, and in absolute silence. No sound recurring after a minute's attention, and indisposed by weariness to any stricter examination, where all examination from one so little acquainted

with the localities might prove unavailing, he returned to his own room; but before again lying down, he judged it prudent to probe the concealments of the tapestry by carrying his sabre round, and everywhere pressing the hangings to the wall. In this trial he met with no resistance at any point; and willingly believing that he had been deceived, or that his ear had exaggerated some trivial sound, in a state of imperfect slumber, he again lay down and addressed himself to sleep. Still there were remembrances which occurred at this moment to disturb him. The readiness with which they had been received at the chateau was in itself suspicious. He remembered the obstinate haunting of their camp on the preceding night, and the robbery conducted with so much knowledge of circumstances. Jonas Melk, the brutal landlord of Waldenhausen, a man known to him by repute (though not personally) as one of the vilest agents employed by the Landgrave, had been actively engaged in his master's service at their preceding stage. He was probably one of those who haunted the wood through the night. And he had been repeatedly informed through the course of the day, that this man in particular, whose features were noticed by the yagers, on occasion of their officer's reproach to him, had been seen at intervals in company with others, keeping a road parallel to their own, and steadily watching their order of advance.

"These recollections, now laid together, impressed him with some uneasiness. But overpowering weariness gave him a strong interest in dismissing them. And a soldier, with the images of fifty combats fresh

in his mind, does not willingly admit the idea of danger from a single arm, and in a situation of household security. Pshaw! he exclaimed, with some disdain, as these martial remembrances rose up before him, especially as the silence had now continued undisturbed for a quarter of an hour. In five minutes more he had fallen profoundly asleep; and in less than one half hour, as he afterwards judged, he was suddenly awakened by a dagger at his throat.

"At one bound he sprung upon his feet. The cloak, in which he had been enveloped, caught upon some of the buckles or ornamented work of his appointments, and for a moment embarrassed his motions. There was no light, except what came from the sullen and intermitting gleams of the fire. But even this was sufficient to show him the dusky outline of two figures. With the foremost he grappled, and, raising him in his arms, threw him powerfully upon the floor, with a force that left him stunned and helpless. The other had endeavoured to pinion his arms from behind; for the body-armour, which Maximilian had not laid aside for the night, under the many anticipations of service which their situation suggested, proved a sufficient protection against the blows of the assassin's poinard. Impatient of the darkness and uncertainty, Maximilian rushed to the door and flung it violently open. The assassin still clung to his arms, conscious that if he once forfeited his hold until he had secured a retreat, he should be taken at disadvantage. But Maximilian now drawing a petronel which hung at his belt, cocked it as rapidly as his embarrassed motions allowed him. The assassin faltered, con-

scious that a moment's relaxation of grasp would enable his antagonist to turn the muzzle over his shoulder. Maximilian, on the other hand, now perfectly awake, and with the benefit of that self-possession which the other so entirely wanted, felt the nervous tremor in the villain's hands; and profiting by this moment of indecision, made a desperate effort, released one arm, which he used with so much effect as immediately to liberate the other, and then intercepting the passage to the stairs, wheeled round upon his murderous enemy, and presenting the petronel to his breast, bade him surrender his arms if he hoped for quarter.

"The man was an athletic, and, obviously, a most powerful ruffian. On his face he carried more than one large glazed cicatrix, that assisted the savage expression of malignity impressed by nature upon his features. And his matted black hair, with its elf-locks, completed the picturesque effect of a face, that proclaimed, in every lineament, a reckless abandonment to cruelty and ferocious passions. Maximilian himself, familiar as he was with the faces of military butchers in the dreadful hours of sack and carnage, recoiled for one instant from this hideous ruffian, who had not even the palliations of youth in his favour, for he seemed fifty at the least. All this had passed in an instant of time; and now, as he recovered himself from his momentary shock at so hateful an expression of evil passions, great was Maximilian's astonishment to perceive his antagonist apparently speechless, and struggling with some over-mastering sense of horror, that convulsed his features, and for a moment glazed his eye."

Of Klosterheim itself we have this little hint, which also has a close bearing on the plot.

"There were, in those days, as is well known to German antiquaries, few castles or fortresses of much importance in Germany which did not communicate by subterraneous passages with the exterior country. In many instances these passages were of surprising extent, first emerging to the light in some secluded spot among rocks or woods, at the distance of two, three, or even four miles. There were cases even in which they were carried below the beds of rivers as broad and deep as the Rhine, the Elbe, or the Danube. Sometimes there were several of such communications on different faces of the fortress; and sometimes each of these branched, at some distance from the building, into separate arms, opening at intervals widely apart. And the uses of such secret communications with the world outside, and beyond a besieging enemy, in a land like Germany, with its prodigious subdivision of independent states and free cities, were far greater than they could have been in any one great continuous principality.

"In many fortified places these passages had existed from the Middle Ages. In Klosterheim they had possibly as early an origin; but by this period it is very probable that the gradual accumulation of rubbish, through a course of centuries, would have unfitted them for use, had not the Peasants' War, in the time of Luther's reformation, little more than one hundred years before, given occasion for their use and repair. At that time Klosterheim had stood a siege, which, from the defect of artillery,

was at no time formidable in a military sense; but as a blockade, formed suddenly when the citizens were slenderly furnished with provisions, it would certainly have succeeded, and delivered up the vast wealth of the convents as a spoil to the peasantry, had it not been for one in particular of these subterraneous passages, which, opening on the opposite side of the little river Iltiss, in a thick *bocage*, where the enemy had established no posts, furnished the means of introducing a continual supply of fresh provisions, to the great triumph of the garrison, and the utter dismay of the superstitious peasants, who looked upon the mysterious supply as a providential bounty to a consecrated cause.

"So memorable a benefit had given to this one passage a publicity and an historical importance which made all its circumstances, and amongst those its internal mouth, familiar even to children. But this was evidently *not* the avenue by which Maximilian had escaped into the forest. For it opened externally on the wrong side of the river, whilst everybody knew that its domestic opening was in one of the chapels of the *schloss;* and another circumstance equally decisive was, that a long flight of stairs, by which it descended below the bed of the river, made it impassable to horses.

"Every attempt, however, failed to trace out the mode of egress for the present. By his spies, Adorni doubted not to find it soon; and in the meantime, that as much as possible the attention of the public might be abstracted from the travellers and their concerns, a public proclamation was issued forbidding all resorts of crowds to the walls. These

were everywhere dispersed on the ninth; and for that day were partially obeyed. But there was little chance that, with any fresh excitement to the popular interest, they would continue to command respect."

The anxiety for the fate of friends still exposed to the danger of attack, had risen to the highest pitch at Klosterheim. But it availed not. The caravan was set upon amidst a dense fog when not far from the city. Maximilian, while making the most heroic efforts, was wounded and taken prisoner; while Lady Paulina reached Klosterheim, and was taken in charge by the Abbess. By and by, to the perplexity and the horror of all, the city became haunted by a "Masque," who appeared for a moment, and as suddenly disappeared; the guards were carried off from their proper stations, and officers of high rank were threatened. These circumstances naturally tended to develop and to intensify all the superstitious dread native to the German mind at that period.

"Terror and superstitious dread predominated undoubtedly in the total impression; but the gentle virtues exhibited by a series of princes, who had made this their favourite residence, naturally enough terminated in mellowing the sternness of such associations into a religious awe, not without its own peculiar attractions. But at present, under the harsh and repulsive character of the reigning Prince, everything took a new colour from his ungenial habits. The superstitious legends, which had so immemorially peopled the *schloss* with spectral apparitions, now revived in its earliest strength. Never was Germany more dedicated to superstition in every shape than at this period. The wild tumul-

tuous times, and the slight tenure upon which all men held their lives, naturally threw their thoughts much upon the other world; and communications with that, or its burthen of secrets, by every variety of agencies, ghosts, divination, natural magic, palmistry, or astrology, found in every city of the land more encouragement than ever.

" It cannot, therefore, be surprising that the well-known apparition of the White Lady (a legend which affected Klosterheim through the fortunes of its Landgraves, no less than several other princely houses of Germany, descended from the same original stock), should about this time have been seen in the dusk of the evening at some of the upper windows in the castle, and once in a lofty gallery of the great chapel during the vesper service. This lady, generally known by the name of the White Lady Agnes, or *Lady Agnes of Weissemburg*, is supposed to have lived in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, and from that time, even to our own days, the current belief is, that on the eve of any great crisis of good or evil fortune impending over the three or four illustrious houses of Germany which trace their origin from her, she makes her appearance in some conspicuous apartment, great baronial hall or chapel, of their several palaces, sweeping along in white robes and a voluminous train. Her appearance of late in the *schloss* of Klosterheim, confidently believed by the great body of the people, was hailed with secret pleasure, as forerunning some great change in the Landgrave's family,—which was but another name for better days to themselves, whilst of necessity it menaced some great evil to the Prince

himself. Hope, therefore, was predominant in their prospects, and in the supernatural intimations of coming changes;—yet awe and deep religious feeling mingled with their hope. Of chastisement approaching to the Landgrave they felt assured,—some dim religious judgment, like that which brooded over the house of Œdipus, was now at hand,—that was the universal impression. His gloomy asceticism of life seemed to argue secret crimes,—these were to be brought to light;—for these, and for this recent tyranny, prosperous as it had seemed for a moment, chastisements were now impending; and something of the awe which belonged to a prince so marked out for doom and fatal catastrophe, seemed to attach itself to his mansion,—more especially, as it was there only that the signs and portents of the coming woe had revealed themselves in the apparition of the White Lady.

"Under this superstitious impression, many of the spectators paused at the entrance of the castle, and lingered in the portal, though presuming that the chamber of justice, according to the frank old usage of Germany, was still open to all comers. Of this notion they were speedily disabused by the sudden retreat of the few who had penetrated into the first antechamber. These persons were harshly repelled in a contumelious manner, and read to the astonished citizens another lesson upon the new arts of darkness and concealment, with which the Landgrave found it necessary to accompany his new acts of tyranny."

When a great *fête* was given in the city, consternation was excited by the intimation that the Masque

would appear,—"that he who ruled by night in Klosterheim could not suppose himself to be excluded from a nocturnal *fête* given by any person in that city." Some citizens affected to laugh because Adorni had been thus defied; but he now set himself the more resolutely to find means to entrap the mysterious stranger.

"These various incidents had furnished abundant matter for conversation in Klosterheim, and had carried the public expectation to the highest pitch of anxiety, some time before the great evening arrived. Leisure had been allowed for fear and every possible anticipation of the wildest character to unfold themselves. Hope, even, amongst many, was a predominant sensation. Ladies were preparing for hysterics. Cavaliers, besides the swords which they wore as regular articles of dress, were providing themselves with stilettoes against any sudden rencontre hand to hand, or any unexpected surprise. Armourers and furbishers of weapons were as much in request as the more appropriate artists who minister to such festal occasions. These again were summoned to give their professional aid and attendance to an extent so much out of proportion to their numbers and their natural power of exertion, that they were harassed beyond all physical capacity of endurance, and found their ingenuity more heavily taxed to find personal substitutes amongst the trades most closely connected with their own, than in any of the contrivances which more properly fell within the business of their own art. Tailors, horse-milliners, shoemakers, friseurs, drapers, mercers, tradesmen of every description,

and servants of every class and denomination, were summoned to a sleepless activity—each in his several vocation, or in some which he undertook by proxy. Artificers who had escaped on political motives from Nuremburg and other Imperial cities, or from the sack of Magdeburg, now showed their ingenuity, and their readiness to earn the bread of industry; and if Klosterheim resembled a hive in the close-packed condition of its inhabitants, it was now seen that the resemblance held good hardly less in the industry which, upon a sufficient excitement, it was able to develop. But in the midst of all this stir, din, and unprecedented activity, whatever occupation each man found for his thoughts or for his hands in his separate employments, all hearts were mastered by one domineering interest—the approaching collision of the Landgrave, before his assembled court, with the mysterious agent who had so long troubled his repose."

But Adorni's schemes did not succeed. The Masque was equal to the occasion, and proceeded so far as to threaten the Landgrave, as he revealed to him his face, saying, "Landgrave, for crimes yet unrevealed, I summon you in twenty days before a tribunal where there is no shield but innocence!"

While Paulina, believing that her lover had been killed, was mourning over his fate in the convent, she received a letter, evidently in his handwriting, telling her that the Landgrave was scheming to injure her, and urging her to flee. This she did. Managing to join a party that was to be escorted to some distance, she became privy to some secrets which proved to be of service afterwards; but she

found herself, sooner than she had fancied, summoned to a court of criminal justice in the castle of Lorenstein, where she received but scant courtesy.

When the twenty days had expired, the Masque appeared to fulfil his promise—the account of the manner in which he does so being most dramatic. Suffice it to say here, that the Masque is none other than Maximilian—the child of the good Landgrave who had been brutally assassinated by the man who succeeded him; that the Landgrave, though he had heard much of Maximilian, and his opposition to his interests, did not know who he was, and had never seen his face, which, from its great resemblance to his father's, so shook his courage, as we have seen, in that momentary exposure to him. All the persons who had been so mysteriously made away with now appear—witnesses of the crimes of the Landgrave, who, amid the exclamations of the people, is deposed in favour of the true heir, Maximilian; and the Lady Paulina soon reappears at his side to become Landgravine amid rejoicings.

If the story here and there shows some lack of variety, and of relief in dialogue, it is most dramatically conceived, and conveys a vivid idea of the condition of Germany at the opening of the seventeenth century; and it is a masterpiece of style, as our extracts must have shown. De Quincey himself, however, after having made his experiment, was so keenly alive to its defects, that he would not consent to its forming part of the collected works. But it is worthy of the attention of the student as revealing the varied capacities of De Quincey's mind, and the high position that he might have secured as a

novelist, had not other interests taken possession of him at those earlier stages of life, when the constructive and inventive powers are most susceptible of education. Though De Quincey never set store by "Klosterheim," a student of his works cannot afford to ignore it; and it has met with such favour, and has been so highly spoken of by several critics of repute, that it would hardly have been right for us to have disposed of it in a summary manner. We add here the opinion of one of these critics, premising, however, that we do not concur with his high estimate in every point. We quote his words mainly for the sake of the facts which are conveyed in his last paragraph:—

"From first to last, without pause, break, or digression, the plot is made conducive to a certain *dénouement*, which the skill of the author has contrived, with great adroitness, so as not to be suspected until the very termination of the story. The leading elements and characteristics of fiction—wild adventure, guilt-born terrors, enduring love, and secret mystery, pervade the whole composition, which reads like a true narrative of actual events, so progressive are the incidents, so complete the *vrai-semblance*. In some scenes, the limits of the supernatural are reached, and the effect is startling. Into his service he has impressed hatred and love, revenge and remorse, fear and courage, mystery and terror; and in the end, in the closing scenes, has freely made use of that response which keeps the reader breathless with expectation. In the employment of mystery and terror, he awakens recollections of the wonderful art with which Mrs. Radcliffe extorted science from the

same mighty agents. Like her too,—and she is named head of the novelists who used such science—though he appeared at times to pass into the supernatural, he never wholly abandons the actual. If he involves the characters in a cloud of mystery, he does not fail to dissipate it at the proper crisis with the ingenuity of a master of the art.

"'Klosterheim,' as a literary composition, is written in De Quincey's best style. Its language is full of concentration, and the story is never once impeded by the digressions, which his warmest admirers admit constitute the defective points in some of his subsequent writings. Another striking feature in 'Klosterheim' is its truly dramatic character—a feature so observable, indeed, that the story was simultaneously dramatised for two of the London theatres, and performed during the greater part of the season with success. The melodramatic character of the story rendered it so readily applicable, that, with the exception of introducing a slight underplot, no material alteration was made by the playwrights."

"Klosterheim," at all events, has for us a distinct biographical interest. It was written—certainly a great part of it was written—amidst grief and loneliness. Perhaps, in De Quincey's case, as in other cases on record, the preoccupation of the mind, in following the fate of imaginary characters, was found to be the most efficient anodyne. Viewed in this aspect, the work will take on a new autobiographic value to any one who wishes to follow the history of De Quincey's mind, and to find points of sympathy with it sufficient to justify a really impartial judgment on such a work.

CHAPTER XIV.

RESIDENCE IN EDINBURGH.

DE QUINCEY'S literary interests, we may say, now centred completely in Edinburgh. In 1832–34, "Blackwood" was brightened by the series on the Cæsars; and articles on Hannah More and Animal Magnetism, a subject which was then causing some stir, followed them. In 1834, the autobiographic sketches began to appear in "Tait's Magazine." His reputation was such that editors were willing to pay him extra prices; but his powers of production were not of the steady and equable kind which can be depended on for a regular supply of marketable material. Besides, he was always fastidious, and found it very difficult to please himself. At this time, as at his first adventure into the literary field in London, he frequently remodelled and re-wrote an article several times over, before he could bring it up to what he regarded as a passable point. He was, in his own way, conscientious in the extreme. If he did not fall readily into what is called the "popular style," he respected his own ideal, and many a half-finished article saw its way to the brilliant ordeal of the fire

in these days. The autobiographic articles in "Tait," pervaded as they were by a strong vein of the personal element, balanced so to speak by a strong desire to give a wholly disinterested view of the most distinguished people he had met, were not in every instance admired. The friends of Wordsworth and the family of Coleridge were both offended, and inclined to make representations and retaliate; but the odd thing was, that neither could disguise a certain pride in the fact that a man of such high authority should, with his acuteness and discrimination, unqualifiedly praise the genius of the men, whatever faults he may have detected and set forth as having existed in their characters. Sara Coleridge, for instance, wrote to a friend on the subject of De Quincey's treatment of her father, and, after saying how offended the family were with certain little personal allusions, she naively goes on to confess:—

"He has characterised my father's genius and peculiar mode of discourse with great eloquence and discrimination. He speaks of him as possessing 'the most spacious intellect, the subtlest and the most comprehensive' (in his judgment) that ever existed amongst men. Whatever may be decided by the world in general upon this point, it is one which, from learning and ability, he is well qualified to discuss. I cannot believe that he had any enmity to my father, indeed he often speaks of his kindness of heart."

And again, in the "Biographia Literaria" (ii. pp. 408, 409) we find this record:—

"Of all the censors of Mr. Coleridge, Mr. de Quincey is the one whose remarks are the most worthy of attention; those of the rest in general

are but views taken from a distance, and filled up by conjecture, views taken through a medium, so thick with *opinion*, even if not clouded with vanity and self-love, that it resembles a horn more than glass or the transpicuous air. The Opium-Eater, as he has called himself, had sufficient inward sympathy with the subject of his criticism to be capable in some degree of beholding his mind, as it actually existed, in all the intermingling shades of individual reality; and in few minds have these shades been more subtly intermingled than in my father's."

Most readers at this date will, we think, be inclined to say that Miss Mitford speaks with singular impartiality and good judgment when she writes thus:—"The truth and life of these Lake sketches is something wonderful. Of course, the blind worshippers of Wordsworth quarrel with him, but there is quite enough left to praise and admire in the bard of 'The Excursion' after accepting Mr. de Quincey's portrait."

"Tait's Magazine," with which, as has been said, his connection continued for upwards of a dozen years, was the main source of his income for that period; and any curious student will find in the volumes for these years various shorter articles which have not been deemed worthy of reprinting, but which are for the most part richly characteristic.

This period, which may be regarded as singularly successful, in a literary point of view, was marked by repeated domestic bereavements, which had their own influence on De Quincey's mind and character. Julius, his youngest son, an attractive child of four years of age, on whom he doted, suddenly died of

fever in 1833. Then his eldest son, William, a brilliant and beautiful youth, not eighteen, "whose scholarship and eagerness for learning," says Mrs. Baird Smith, "astonished even my father, who was his sole tutor," passed away in 1835, from a painful and obscure disease of the brain. Mrs. de Quincey's health failed rapidly after her son William's death. She died in 1837, in Edinburgh, and was buried in the West Kirkyard beside her children.

In spite of much in her husband's habits fitted in many ways to ruffle the current of domestic happiness, their life had been beyond most bright and cheerful, full of the patient confidence that true affection only can sustain. The loss of one who had proved so faithful a helpmeet was a heavy blow to De Quincey, and disinclined though he was to allow the mere *facts* of biography to steal into his sketches, we have seen how he has enshrined that memory in words as touching and suggestive as anything in the English language.

"Looking back to that time, when I was a mere child," Mrs. Baird Smith writes, "I yet seem to see that his mind was unhinged by these sorrows, and the overwhelming thought of being left with a family of such differing ages and needs, and with no female relative at hand to help him, as even his eldest daughter was then so young that she must have seemed to him, as she did to others, herself most needing a mother's care. But her character soon so developed as to leave him no anxiety on this ground, for she became the able and upright mistress of the household almost immediately, and her and her next brother's wise resolution it was—the two

being still little beyond childhood—which removed the family from the expensive and undesirable life of a town to the quiet and wholesome little home near Lasswade, she sacrificing much personal enjoyment and companionship at the time to secure what she felt to be for the honour of the family—the power to live within our small means."

In the introduction to a series of "Letters from a Modern Author to his Daughters on the useful Limits of Literature considered as a Study for Females"—a work which unfortunately exists only in an unavailable fragmentary condition—he thus refers pathetically to these trials:—

You have been in some measure a witness to the fortitude with which I have borne these later calamities. True it is that we, who see most of each other, nearest relations united in the same household, see but little of that inner world, that world of secret self-consciousness, in which each of us lives a second life apart and with himself alone, collateral to his other life, or life which he lives in common with others. That is a world in which every man, the very meanest, is a solitary presence, and cannot admit the fellowship even of that one amongst all his fellow-creatures whom he loves the most and perhaps regards as his other self. But allowing for this impossibility of following me into these secret haunts of feeling—privileged recesses for all human beings alike—you have in other respects seen the silence and tranquillity with which I have supported losses the heaviest by which I could have been assailed—wounds applied, as if with premeditating skill, exactly to those points in which chiefly I was vulnerable. I will trust myself to notice particularly only one case. Your eldest brother, my first-born child, the crown and glory of my life, died* nearly

* Of a complaint affecting the brain, and so far anomalous that a long and elaborate account of it was thought requisite, and was drawn up and published by the learned and very able physician Dr. Balfour, who chiefly watched its progress.

upon his eighteenth birthday. Upon him I had exhausted all that care and hourly companionship could do for the culture of an intellect, in all stages of his life, somewhat premature. And the result was such, so far beyond what I had even hoped for, that I was advised (and at one time I entertained the advice) to publish a little memorial account of him and his accomplishments. In this I could at least have shown, in proof of his classical attainments, not merely an Etonian skill in the management of Greek metres, but, in one instance at least, in a commentary which he had composed at sixteen upon Suetonius, that he had dealt successfully with some difficulties that had baffled both Casaubon and Joseph Scaliger. Some of these, indeed, I shall yet take an opportunity of publishing; not so much by way of trophy to him, as for the real light they bring to the text of that author. But from the scheme of a memoir my heart retreated under the hopelessness that I could raise any echo to the feelings which moved there by the faint exhibition of a few glittering accomplishments—accomplishments possessed in common with many of every generation for the last two centuries, who, each in his turn, has been honoured by tributes which brightened their memories with some fugitive effect, have had their names murmured over with a sound continually decaying through a few brief months, and then have all alike sunk into everlasting silence and forgetfulness. Such records are tolerated out of pity for the anguish of wounds yet raw and bleeding; but rarely do they gather in their train any genuine accompaniments of sympathy: nor is praise, after all, and the language of honour, any balm to real sorrow: love only, the love which feels a loss, and not *for* a loss, is the one sole consolation which penetrates to the heart of those who weep in secret for the vanished faces of their household.

Under this loss, which (as I have said) cut away from me the very glory of my life, you can bear me witness that I have not otherwise shown any alteration in habits of feeling than by study and literary labours far more intense. I believe that in the course of any one month since that unhappy day I have put forth more effort in the way of thought, of research, and of composition, than in any five months together selected from my previous life. Thus at least (if no other good end has been attained) I have been able to instruct my surviving children in the knowledge that grief may be supported, and how it may be

supported. Energy of thought, and the determinate application of the mind to themes able to absorb its entire capacity of feeling—these, with a spirit of unmurmuring resignation, are equal to the task of suspending daily for hours, turning aside, and charming into slumber, the most heart-gnawing affliction.

From 1830 till the year 1834 he had lived with his family, either in King Street or Forres Street, or at Duddingstone; but after the death of his wife he found, or fancied he found, that the children, relieved from her wise restraint and control, were too much for him. They were noisy, and inclined to intrude on him in his study, and he therefore took odgings in another portion of the town; in 1838, settling at 42 Lothian Street (the same house he died in), which was then kept by the same people, Mrs. Wilson and her sister Miss Stark. The latter tells that on De Quincey's first night there, Professor Wilson, not having heard of his advent, chancing to call on a Professor Aitken who was in the house, was delighted to meet two friends instead of one; and she adds, that "the three learned men had a strong cup of coffee that night, and sat and talked till it was late." This he only quitted to accompany his daughters to Lasswade in 1840. Out of many records of these years, in the shape of friendly letters to the Misses Miller, daughters of Major Miller of Dalswinton, and others, the following may be given here:—

Saturday Morning, May 26, 1837.

My Dear Miss Jessie,—In some beautiful verses where the writer has occasion to speak of festivals, household or national, that revolve annually, I recollect at this moment from his description one line to this effect—

"*Remembered* half the year and *hoped* the rest."

Thus Christmas, suppose, is a subject for *memory* until mid-

summer, after which it becomes a subject for *hope*, because the mind ceases to haunt the image of the past festival in a dawning anticipation of another that is daily drawing nearer. "Well," I hear you say, "a very pretty sentimental opening for a note addressed to a lady! but what is the *moral* of it?"

The moral, my dear Miss Jessie, is this—that I, soul-sick of endless writing, look back continually with sorrowful remembrances to the happy interval which I spent under your roof; and next after that, I regret those insulated evenings (scattered here and there) which, with a troubled pleasure—pleasure anxious and boding—I have passed beneath the soft splendours of your lamps since I was obliged to quit the quiet haven of your house. Sorrowful, I say, these remembrances are, and must be by contrast with my present gloomy solitude; and if they ever cease to be sorrowful, it is when some new evening to be spent underneath the same lamps comes within view. *That* which is *remembered* only suddenly puts on the blossoming of *hope*, and wears the vernal dress of a happiness to come, instead of the sad autumnal dress of happiness that has vanished.

Is this sentimental? Be it so; but then also it is intensely true; and sentimentality cannot avail to vitiate truth; on the contrary, truth avails to dignify and exalt the sentimental. But why breathe forth these feelings, sentimental or not, precisely on this vulgar Saturday? (for Saturday is a day radically vulgar to my mind, incurably sacred to the genius of marketing, and hostile to the sentimental in any shape). "Why?" you persist in asking. Simply because, if this is Saturday, it happens that to-morrow is Sunday; and on a Sunday night only, *if even then*, I can now approach you without danger. And what I fear is—that you, so strict in your religious observances, will be dedicating to some evening lecture, or charity sermon, or missionary meeting, that time which *might* be spent in Duncan Street, and perhaps—pardon me for saying so—more profitably. "How so?" Why because, by attending the missionary meeting, for example, you will, after all, scarcely contribute the 7th, or even the 70th, share to the conversion of some New Zealander or feather-cinctured prince of Owhyee. Whereas now, on the other hand, by vouchsafing your presence to Duncan Street, you will give—and not to an unbaptized infidel, who can never thank you, but to a son of the Cross, who will thank you from the very centre of his heart—a happiness like that I spoke of as

belonging to recurring festivals, furnishing a subject for *memory* through one half of the succeeding interval, and for *hope* through the other.

Florence was with me yesterday morning, and again throughout the evening; and, by the way, dressed in your present. Perhaps she may see you before I do, and may tell you that I have been for some time occupied at intervals in writing some memorial "Lines for a Cenotaph to Major Miller of the Horse Guards Blue," and towards which I want some information from you. The lines are about thirty-six in number; too many, you will say, for an epitaph. Yes, if they were meant for the *real* place of burial; but these, for the very purpose of evading that restriction, are designed for a cenotaph, to which situation a more unlimited privilege in that respect is usually conceded.

It is probably to a period not much later than this that Mr. Hill Burton refers in his unique sketch of De Quincey, under the thin disguise of "Papaverius," in "The Bookhunter," from which he will no doubt permit us to make a few extracts here:—

"The next slide of the lantern is to represent a quite peculiar and abnormal case. It introduces a strangely fragile, unsubstantial, and puerile figure, wherein, however, resided one of the most potent and original spirits that ever frequented a tenement of clay. . . . The first impression, that a boy has appeared, vanishes instantly. Though in one of the sweetest and most genial of his essays he shows how every man retains so much in him of the child he originally was—and he himself retained a great deal of his primitive simplicity—it was buried within the depths of his heart—not visible externally. On the contrary, on one occasion, when he corrected an erroneous reference to an event as being a century old, by saying that he recollected its occurrence, one

felt almost a surprise at the necessary limitation in his age—so old did he appear, with his arched brow loaded with thought, and the countless little wrinkles which engrained his skin, gathering thickly round the curiously expressive and subtle lips. These lips are speedily opened by some casual remark, and presently the flood of talk passes forth from them, free, clear, and continuous,—never rising into declamation, never losing a certain mellow earnestness, and all consisting of sentences as exquisitely joined together as if they were destined to challenge the criticism of the remotest posterity. Still the hours stride over each other, and still flows on the stream of gentle rhetoric, as if it were *labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.* It is now far into the night, and slight hints and suggestions are propagated about separation and home-going. The topic starts new ideas on the progress of civilisation, the effect of habit on men in all ages, and the power of the domestic affections. Descending from the general to the special, he could testify to the inconvenience of late hours; for was it not the other night that, coming to what was, or what he believed to be, his own door, he knocked, and knocked, but the old woman within either couldn't or wouldn't hear him; so he scrambled over a wall, and having taken his repose in a furrow, was able to testify to the extreme unpleasantness of such a couch. The predial groove might indeed nourish kindly the infant seeds and shoots of the peculiar vegetable to which it was appropriated, but was not a comfortable place of repose for adult man.

. . . . . .

"Suppose the scene changed to a pleasant country-house, where the enlivening talk has made a guest forget—

> 'The lang Scots miles,
> The mosses, waters, slaps, and stiles'

that lie between him and his place of rest. He must be instructed in his course, but the instruction reveals more difficulties than it removes, and there is much doubt and discussion which Papaverius at once clears up, as effectually as he had ever dispersed a cloud of logical sophisms; and this time the feat is performed by a stroke of the thoroughly practical, which looks like inspiration—he will accompany the forlorn traveller and lead him through the difficulties of the way—for have not midnight wanderings and musings made him familiar with all its intricacies? Roofed by a huge wide-awake which makes his tiny figure look like the stalk of some great fungus, and with a lantern of more than common dimensions in his hand, away he goes—down the wooded path, up the steep bank, along the brawling stream, and across the waterfall—and ever as he goes there comes from him a continued stream of talk concerning the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, and other kindred matters. Surely, if we two were to be seen by any human eyes, it must have been supposed that some gnome, or troll, or kelpie was luring the listener to his doom. The worst of such affairs as this was the consciousness that, when left, he would continue walking on until, weariness overcoming him, he would take his rest wherever that happened, like some poor mendicant. He used to denounce, with his most fervent eloquence, that

barbarous and brutal provision of the law of England, which rendered sleeping in the open air an act of vagrancy, and so punishable, if the sleeper could not give a satisfactory account of himself—a thing which Papaverius could never give under any circumstances. After all, I fear this is an attempt to describe the indescribable. It was the commonest of sayings when any of his friends were mentioning to each other 'his last,' and creating mutual shrugs of astonishment, that, were we to attempt to tell all about him, no man could believe it, so separate would the whole be from all the normal conditions of human nature.

. . . . . .

"Those who knew him a little, might call him a loose man in money-matters; those who knew him closer, laughed at the idea of coupling any notion of pecuniary or other like responsibility with his nature. You might as well attack the character of the nightingale, which may have nipped up your five-pound note and torn it to shreds to serve as nest-building material. Only immediate craving necessities could ever extract from him an acknowledgment of the common vulgar agencies by which men subsist in civilised society; and only while the necessity lasted did the acknowledgment exist. Take just one example, which will render this clearer than any generalities. He arrives late at a friend's door, and on gaining admission—a process in which he often endured impediments—he represents, with his usual silver voice and measured rhetoric, the absolute necessity of his being then and there invested with a sum of money in the current coin of the realm

—the amount limited, from the nature of his necessities which he very freely states, to 7s. 6d. Discovering, or fancying he discovers, signs that his eloquence is likely to be unproductive, he is fortunately reminded that, should there be any difficulty in connection with security for the repayment of the loan, he is at that moment in possession of a document, which he is prepared to deposit with the lender—a document calculated, he cannot doubt, to remove any feeling of anxiety which the most prudent person could experience in the circumstances. After a rummage in his pockets, which develops miscellaneous and varied, but as yet by no means valuable possessions, he at last comes to the object of his search, a crumpled bit of paper, and spreads it out—a fifty-pound bank-note! The friend, who knew him well, was of opinion that, had he, on delivering over the 7s. 6d., received the bank-note, he never would have heard anything more of the transaction from the other party. It was also his opinion that, before coming to a personal friend, the owner of the note had made several efforts to raise money on it among persons who might take a purely business view of such transactions; but the lateness of the hour, and something in the appearance of the thing altogether, had induced these mercenaries to forget their cunning, and decline the transaction.

"He stretched till it broke the proverb that 'to give quickly is as good as to give twice.' His giving was quick enough on the rare occasions when he had wherewithal to give, but then the act was final, and could not be repeated. If he suffered in his own person from this peculiarity, he suffered still more

in his sympathies, for he was full of them to all breathing creatures, and, like poor Goldie, it was agony to him to hear the beggar's cry of distress, and to hear it without the means of assuaging it, though in a departed fifty pounds there were doubtless the elements for appeasing many a street wail. All sums of money were measured to him through the common standard of immediate use. Not for him were the common enjoyments and excitements of the bookhunter's pursuit. He cared not to add volume to volume, and heap up the relics of the printing press. All the external niceties about pet editions, peculiarities of binding, or of printing rarity itself, were no more to him than to the Arab or the Hottentot. His pursuit, indeed, was like that of the savage who seeks but to appease the hunger of the moment. If he catch a prey just sufficient for his desires, it is well; yet he will not hesitate to bring down the elk or the buffalo, and, satiating himself with the choicest delicacies, abandon the bulk of the carcase to the wolves or the vultures. So of Papaverius. If his intellectual appetite were craving after some passage in the 'Œdipus,' or in the 'Medeia,' or in 'Plato's Republic,' he would be quite contented with the most tattered and valueless fragment of the volume if it contained what he wanted; but, on the other hand, he would not hesitate to seize upon your tall copy in Russia-gilt and tooled; nor would the exemption of an *editio princeps* from everyday sordid work restrain his sacrilegious hands. If it should contain the thing he desires to see, what is to hinder him from wrenching out the twentieth volume of your 'Encyclopædia Methodique,' or 'Ersch'

and 'Gruber,' leaving a vacancy like an extracted front tooth, and carrying it off to his den of Cacus? If you should mention the matter to any vulgar-minded acquaintance given to the unhallowed practice of jeering, he would probably touch his nose with his extended palm and say, 'Don't you wish you may get it?' True, the world has gained a brilliant essay on Euripides or Plato; but what is that to the rightful owner of the lost sheep?

"The learned world may very fairly be divided into those who return the books borrowed by them, and those who do not. Papaverius decidedly belonged to the latter order. A friend addicted to the marvellous boasts that, under the pressure of a call by a public library to replace a mutilated book by a new copy which would have cost £30, he recovered a volume from Papaverius, through the agency of a person specially bribed and authorised to take any measures—insolence and violence excepted; but the power of extraction that must have been employed in such a process excites very painful reflections. Some legend, too, there is of a book-creditor having forced his way into the Cacus den, and there seen a sort of rubble-work inner wall of volumes with their edges outwards, while others, bound and unbound—the plebeian sheepskin and the aristocratic Russian—were squeezed into certain tubs drawn from the washing establishment of a confiding landlady. In other instances the book has been recognised at large, greatly enhanced in value by a profuse edging of manuscript notes from a gifted pen—a phenomenon calculated to bring into practical use the speculations of the civilians about pictures painted on other people's

panels.* What became of all his waifs and strays, it would be well not to inquire too curiously. If he ran short of legitimate *tabula rasa* to write on, do you think he would hesitate to tear out the most convenient leaves of any broad-margined book, whether belonging to himself or another? Nay, it is said he once gave in *copy* written on the edges of a tall octavo Somnium Scipionis; and, as he did not obliterate the original matter, the printer was rather puzzled, and made a funny jumble between the letter-press Latin and the manuscript English. All these things were the types of an intellectual vitality which despised and thrust aside all that was gross or material in that wherewith it came in contact. Surely, never did the austerities of monk or anchorite so entirely cast all these away as his peculiar nature removed them from him. It may be questioned if he ever knew what it was to 'eat a good dinner,' or could even comprehend the nature of such a felicity. Yet in all the sensuous nerves which connect as it were the body with the ideal, he was painfully susceptible. Hence a false quantity or a wrong note in music was an agony to him; and it is remembered with what ludicrous solemnity he apostrophised his unhappy fate as one over whom a cloud of the darkest despair had just been drawn. A peacock had come to live within hearing distance from him, and not only the terrific yells of the accursed biped pierced him to the soul, but the continued terror of their recurrence kept his nerves in agonising tension during the intervals of silence. Peace be with his gentle

* Just. ii. 2, 34.

and kindly spirit, now for sometime separated from its grotesque and humble tenement of clay! It is both right and pleasant to say that the characteristics here spoken of were not those of his latter days. In these he was tended by affectionate hands; and I have always thought it a wonderful instance of the power of domestic and filial management that, through the ministrations of a devoted offspring, this strange being was so cared for, that those who came in contact with him then, and then only, might have admired him as the patriarchal head of an agreeable and elegant household."

The years 1837–40 were particularly busy and productive years. In addition to the articles on the "Essenes," which showed immense research, and the power of penetrating beyond masses of detail to the essential purport of remote social movements, and the articles on "Style," which appeared in "Blackwood" in 1840–41, and those on "Homer and the Homeridæ" which speedily followed them—De Quincey continued his "Reminiscences" in "Tait," and also wrote several of the biographies for the "Encyclopædia Britannica." The most notable of these was that on Shakespeare. Here, in the absence of clear historic fact, he showed in a higher degree than has probably been attained by any other Englishman —certainly than by any of his own contemporaries— the power of literary restoration, a power which may be said to correspond to the gift of the comparative anatomist. De Quincey, in spite of the cloud that rests on large spaces in the life of the "Gentle Will," wrote a very clear and complete biography, which has hardly been displaced by later efforts, though research

has since then been busy, and has achieved much. Of this essay, which appeared in 1840, we find a writer in "Fraser's Magazine," for July 1841, thus taking occasion to recount his meetings with De Quincey, though professedly concerned only with the "New Life of Shakespeare:"—

"We have ourselves read all the lives of Shakespeare that we could buy, borrow, or steal; and in the most operose, as in the most frivolous, we have always met with something to interest or amuse. The last that has fallen into our hands is one by that curiously meditative and subtle spirit, Thomas de Quincey, who has thrust an admirable and ingenious memoir into a grave and ponderous work, the 'Encyclopædia Britannica,' where it shines among treatises on the senses, serpents, and shipbuilding. The Opium-Eater must be a new man. The dreamy languor of his former state seems to have passed away; and he is as alert and vigorous, and as zealous in his researches and investigations, as if he had all his life, like Milton, risen at the crowing of the cock, and been unconscious of the *black bottle* that graced his table through the long hours of midnight among the wilds of Westmoreland. We remember once passing a night with this most eloquent dissertator and conversationalist. The winds, keen and cutting as a scythe, swept the North Bridge of Edinburgh; but snugly seated in the Rainbow, we bade defiance to its blasts. Hour after hour glided on the stream of talk, welling out from the capacious, overflowing cells of Thought and Memory, that a single word, a hint, or token could stir and agitate. De Quincey seemed to live in the past, and the past

has few such admirers or painters. When fully kindled up and warmed on his subject, his whole talk is poetry; and his slight, attenuated frame, pale countenance, and massive forehead, with the singular sweetness and melody of his voice and language, impress one as if a voice from the dead—from some 'old man eloquent'—had risen to tell us of the hidden world of thought, and imagination, and knowledge.

> "'No plant that grows on mortal soil,
> Nor in the glistering foil
> Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies.'

"This is to exhibit the Opium-Eater in his best vein, and the picture is not overcharged. From such a source we expected an interesting sketch of Shakespeare's life—some ingenious speculation and philosophising, a little wayward criticism or captious observation, as the wind might sit—and we have not been disappointed. About twenty close-printed, double-columned quarto pages has Mr. de Quincey presented to his readers on the subject of Shakespeare, running up his story even from his boyish days, and descanting on every salient point and prominent circumstance in that brief but glorious life. The narrative of course is merely a few facts—a slender thread on which to hang a string of pearls."

By this time, too, De Quincey was at work on his "Logic of Political Economy," which shows an aspect in which *prima facie* one would scarcely have expected him to figure as an expert.

CHAPTER XV.

LASSWADE.

IT was in 1840 that the family were transferred to Mavis Bush, a neat little cottage near Lasswade, which was leased for a period of years. It was pleasantly situated near the river Esk, and being within a few miles of Edinburgh, presented the attraction of a retreat without the sense of banishment from such intellectual society as he cared for.

It needs, however, to be frankly admitted that the sense of depression which, in spite of this pleasant change of residence, had at intervals continued to oppress him for many years after the death of his wife, had led to deeper relapses into opium than he had known between 1827 and 1837. Not seldom his misery was very great, in the mingled impotence to produce marketable work, and the sense of burdens with which he felt himself unable to cope. Places soon came to exercise an indescribable influence over him, as suggesting painful associations. This must be taken in some measure to account for his frequent changes of lodgings, and his occasional

escapes, sometimes for weeks, to the houses of friends—friends who could for the most part allow for his eccentric ways in admiration of his genius, his eloquence, and the finer points in his personal character. Amongst these were Professor Wilson, Mr. Hill Burton, Professor Lushington, and Professor J. P. Nichol, the well-known astronomer, with whom—as any one will believe who remembers the article on Lord Rosse's telescopes—De Quincey was able to discuss the most abstruse ideas arising out of the more recent facts of astronomical research. Many a conversation took place at the tables of these three gentlemen (in which De Quincey was a leading voice), which as well deserved preservation as most table-talk that has been more prized, and privileged with preservation in print: but De Quincey had no Boswell.

It was mainly on account of his interest in astronomical researches that, in 1841–43, he made a stay in Glasgow, in order that he might profit by converse with his friend, Professor J. P. Nichol, at the Observatory. He stayed for a short time with Professor Nichol in the old College, and then for a few weeks with Professor Lushington, immediately after that taking lodgings, first in the High Street, opposite the College, and afterwards at 79 Renfield Street, which lodgings (though during the years that intervened between his visits to Glasgow and when he resided with his daughters at Lasswade he never used them) were faithfully paid for till the year 1847, as here also were the inevitable gatherings of books, and papers, to which, as though they could not be moved, he must have recourse when

special circumstances arose to make reference necessary to anything in the piles there gathered. His power of managing amidst such heaps of books and papers was so dependent on arrangements marked by local position alone, that we can a little understand this peculiarity of his with respect to these gatherings, and his terror lest anything should be disturbed—a terror that led him to have at least four separate sets of lodgings, all being paid for at one time. It will thus readily be understood that necessities would arise for his sometimes going to Glasgow, as we find that he did—being there for the most part from March 1841 to June 1843, and again in 1847 from January to the end of October. He may have paid visits during the period between these more settled residences; but in 1845 we can find record of only one hurried visit in the end of October of that year, when he reached Glasgow the one day and left it the next. At all events, he certainly did not, after 1841, reside for any lengthened period with Professor Nichol. From other evidence, it is apparent that in 1845 he was much occupied in preparing his son, Francis, who had up till this time been a clerk in a mercantile house, to pass a Latin examination preliminary to entrance on medical studies; and he was with this object in Edinburgh, near the College. In 1843, and again in 1847, he was writing for a Glasgow newspaper which is not now in existence.

The following note to his son Francis, then still in Manchester, may be read with interest, both on account of the subject and the manner of treating it:—

Monday, August 8, 1842.

My Dear Francis,—I received your letter yesterday, six days after its date. This—the delay, I mean—arose, of course, from its circuitous route through Lasswade. That letter I will answer fully in a few days. Meantime, in this I reply to a former letter, in which you mentioned that you had read with pleasure the too famous "Letters of Junius." It was right, perhaps, that you should feel *some* pleasure in an author shrewd, caustic, sometimes even brilliant, and always happy in retort or stinging sarcasm. And for a young person, without much experience or power of comparing his sense of pleasure with any settled standard (which is slow to form itself in the mind), very often it is difficult in a high degree to ascertain how much he really *has* been pleased. Assured from without that he ought to have been pleased, too often he fancies that he was, and abides by that belief as a fixed persuasion; though, left to himself, and unbiassed by any strong preconception of merit in the author, very possibly he might have found nothing but what was wearisome.

Without discussing too anxiously the real merits of Junius as a master of composition, let me tell you one secret about him which accounts for his high reputation through so many years after his personalities must have become obsolete; for consider:—One generation succeeding to his own even *within* the eighteenth century, much more a second generation in this nineteenth century, what could *they* know or care about Sir W. Draper, the Dukes of Bedford and of Grafton, or Lord Mansfield as the Chief Justice of England? This, you will say, tells in favour of Junius; for if he continued to please and to dazzle after he could no longer be supposed much indebted to his slanderous insinuations and his felicitous personalities, if he soared buoyantly through two generations of men when those Icarian wings had melted away,—surely this argues some deep intrinsic merit, potent enough to survive all casual and momentary attractions from illegitimate sources. True, it argues such a merit no doubt; but too powerfully. You have heard of arguments "proving too much;" this is one of such arguments; and it well illustrates what is meant by *proving too much*. It is when the inference, to which the argument tends, would turn out too weighty for the case itself to support. "Is this your trunk, sir? this very splendid-looking trunk?"

"Oh yes, porter, it is mine; I brought it yesterday in this cab." "I am afraid not, sir; for, when I try to lift it, I begin to perceive that it would crush your cab." In the case of Junius, were it at all true that some solid merit of a permanent kind had availed to compensate the gradual decay of his transient sarcasms, and to operate as a substitute, that merit must be excessive; and, therefore, the more easy it would be to assign it, to name it, or to describe it. For it must be a merit not only qualified to supply the gradual dropping away of personalities once racy and stimulant to the palate of every man familiar with public life (every man, for instance, at the first publication of the Letters, knew by sight and had an interest in Lord Granby, in Lord Mansfield, &c.); but it must be a merit vivid enough to counteract the dulness of obsolete —nay, forgotten—politics. No dulness in this world is equal to that of faded scandal, of stale law, of superannuated politics. Think of the fury with which you receive last *year's* paper from the waiter, dated August 8,—that unhappy man having lit the fire with the corresponding date of An. Dom. 1842, through hurry or philosophic absence of mind, tendering respectfully to you the very freshest and newest paper he has left himself—viz., for August 8, 1841. Assassination becomes almost a duty in such a case. But how if the villain should absolutely tender a journal of thirty-five, or even twice thirty-five, years back; perfectly right as to the *day* and the *month*, only so horribly wrong as to the *year* as to have been obviously stolen out of the pocket of your great-grandfather's riding-coat, confided to an ancestor of this waiter for the purpose of being dried at the kitchen-fire? You will admit that such a newspaper would need to show some most extraordinary splendour of one kind or other in order to balance the staleness of its news. The "Letters of Junius" form precisely such a newspaper, with only sarcastic epigram and innuendo so nicely pointed that we ourselves are constantly reminded of instances to-day to which they might be applied, and yet the one defect about Junius is that he never in one solitary instance rises to a general principle.*

* This is but a vivid familiar illustration of what he says in his essay on "Rhetoric:"—"It is an absolute fact that Junius has not one principle, aphorism, or remark of a general nature

The year 1814 was notable for several reasons, and we must pause for a moment to dwell upon it. Amid the pressure of accumulated cares, he had so relapsed that he had once more reached something like five thousand drops of laudanum per day. This, as we shall see, is his fourth fall, which he himself honestly acknowledges in a passage written towards the close of his life. He now began to experience certain phases of nervous suffering in a more intense form than ever. He thought he now traced them directly to the opium, which he had always hitherto held to have modified or lessened certain acute and recurrent symptoms. His jottings and memoranda during this period show that he possessed more strength of will and self-control than he is usually credited with, else assuredly he must now have succumbed. Having convinced himself of the curse that excessive opium indulgence had been to him, he once more set himself resolutely to subdue it. His constant, careful jottings of graduated reductions day by day—his patient records of the effect of ordinary articles of diet, coffee, cocoa, &c.—his measured round of exercise, amounting to fifteen or twenty miles per day, often taken in the little treadmill walk of the garden attached to the Lasswade

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in his whole armoury; not in a solitary instance did his barren understanding ascend to an abstraction or general idea, but lingered for ever in the dust and rubbish of individuality, amongst the tangible realities of things and persons. Hence the peculiar absurdity of that hypothesis which discovered Junius in the person of Burke. The opposition was here too pointedly ludicrous between Burke, who exalted the merest personal themes into the dignity of philosophic speculations, and Junius, in whose hands the very loftiest dwindled into questions of person and party."

cottage, forty rounds counting for a mile — all are touching in the agony that may be read between the lines. He himself, in a letter to one of his dearest friends, has thus shadowed forth the experiences of that time :—

"With respect to my book ["The Logic of Political Economy," which appeared in 1844], which perhaps by this time you and Professor Nichol will have received through the publishers, I have a word to say. Upon some of the distinctions there contended for it would be false humility if I should doubt they are sound. The substance, I am too well assured, is liable to no dispute. But as to the method of presenting the distinctions, as to the composition of the book, and the whole evolution of a course of thinking, there it is that I too deeply recognise the mind affected by my morbid condition. Through that ruin, and by help of that ruin, I looked into and read the latter states of Coleridge. His chaos I comprehended by the darkness of my own, and both were the work of laudanum. It is as if ivory carvings and elaborate fretwork and fair enamelling should be found with worms and ashes amongst coffins and the wrecks of some forgotten life or some abolished nature. In parts and fractions eternal creations are carried on, but the nexus is wanting, and life and the central principle which should bind together all the parts at the centre, with all its radiations to the circumference, are wanting. Infinite incoherence, ropes of sand, gloomy incapacity of vital pervasion by some one plastic principle, that is the hideous incubus upon my mind always. For there is no disorganised wreck so absolute, so perfect, as that which is wrought by misery.

"Misery is a strong word; and I would not have molested your happiness by any such gloomy reference, were it not that I did really, and in solemn earnest, regard my condition in that same hopeless light as I did until lately. I had one sole glimmer of hope, and it was this—that laudanum might be the secret key to all this wretchedness, not utterable to any human ear, which for ever I endured. Upon this subject the following is my brief record. On leaving Glasgow in the first week of June 1843, I was as for two years you had known me. Why I know not, but for some cause during the summer months the weight of insufferable misery and mere abhorrence of life increased; but also it fluctuated. A conviction fell upon me that immense exercise might restore me. But you will imagine my horror when, with that conviction, I found, precisely in my earliest efforts, my feet gave way, and the misery in all its strength came back. Every prospect I had of being laid up as a cripple for life. Much and deeply I pondered on this, and I gathered myself up as if for a final effort. For if that fate were established, farewell I felt for me to all hope of restoration. Eternally the words sounded in my ears: 'Suffered and was buried.' Unless that one effort which I planned and determined, as often you see a prostrate horse 'biding his time' and reserving his strength for one mighty struggle, too surely I believed that for me no ray of light would ever shine again. The danger was, that at first going off on exercise the inflammation should come on; that, if then I persisted, the inflammation would settle into the bones, and the case become desperate. It matters not to trouble you with the details—the result was this:—I

took every precaution known to the surgical skill of the neighbourhood. Within a measured space of forty-four yards in circuit, so that forty rounds were exactly required for one mile, I had within ninety days walked a thousand miles. And so far I triumphed. But because still I was irregular as to laudanum, this also I reformed. For six months no results; one dreary uniformity of report—absolute desolation; misery so perfect that too surely I perceived, and no longer disguised from myself, the impossibility of continuing to live under so profound a blight. I now kept my journal as one who in a desert island is come to his last day's provisions. On Friday the 23d of February, I might say for the first time, in scriptural words, 'And the man was sitting clothed and in his right mind.' That is not too strong an expression. I had known all along, and too ominously interpreted the experience from the fact, that I was not in my perfect mind. Lunacy causes misery; the border is sometimes crossed, and too often that is the order of succession. But also misery, and above all physical misery, working by means of intellectual remembrances and persecution of thoughts, no doubt sometimes inversely causes lunacy. To that issue I felt that all things tended. You may guess, therefore, the awe that fell upon me, when, not by random accident, capable of no theory on review, but in consequence of one firm system pursued through eight months as to one element, and nearly three as to another, I recovered in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, such a rectification of the compass as I had not known for years. It is true that this frame departed from me within forty-eight hours; but that no way alarmed me—I drew hope from the

omen. It is as if a man had been in a whirlpool, carried violently by a headlong current, and before he could speak or think, he was riding as if at anchor, once more dull and untroubled, as in days of infancy. The current caught me again; and the old sufferings in degree came back, as I have said. There is something shocking and generally childish, by too obvious associations, in any suggestions of suicide; but too certainly I felt that to this my condition tended; for again enormous irritability was rapidly travelling over the disk of my life, and this, and the consciousness of increasing weakness, added to my desolation of heart. I felt that no man could continue to struggle. Coleridge had often spoken to me of the dying away from him of all hope; not meaning, as I rightly understood him, the hope that forms itself as a distant look out into the future, but of the gladsome vital feelings that are born of the blood, and make the goings-on of life pleasurable.

"Then I partly understood him, now perfectly; and laying all things together, I returned obstinately to the belief that laudanum was at the root of all this unimaginable hell. Why then not, if only by way of experiment, leave it off? Alas! that had become impossible. Then I descended to a hundred drops. Effects so dreadful and utterly unconjectured by medical men succeeded that I was glad to get back under shelter. Not the less I persisted; silently, surely, descended the ladder, and, as I have said, suddenly found my mind as if whirled round on its true centre. A line of Wordsworth's about Germany I remembered:—

'All power was given her in the dreadful trance.'

Such was my sense: illimitable seemed the powers re-

stored to me; and now, having tried the key, and found it the true key, even though a blast of wind has blown the door to again, no jot of spirits was gone away from me: I shall arise as one risen from the dead.

"This long story I have told you, because nothing short of this could explain my conduct, past, present, and future. And thus far there is an interest for all the world—that I am certain of this, viz., that misery is the talisman by which man communicates with the world outside of our fleshly world."

In detached parts of his journals we find record of his experiences during this terrible struggle of 1844:—

"This night, Wednesday, December 25, about 7 P.M., has first solemnly revealed itself to me that I am and have long been under a curse [q. the opium curse?], all the greater for being physically and by effort endurable, and for hiding itself, *i.e.*, playing in and out from all offices of life at every turn of every moment. Oh, dreadful! by degrees infinitely worse than leprosy—than——. But oh, what signifies the rhetoric of a case so sad! Conquer it I must by exercise unheard of, or it will conquer me."

And later:—

"Did you ever read of leprosy as it existed in Judea, or—and that was worse—as it existed in Europe during the dark ages? Did you ever read of that tremendous visitation in the early days of Judaism, when, if the poor patient would have hushed up his misery in silence, the walls of his house whispered of his whereabouts. Horrible! that a man's own chamber—the place of his refuge and retreat—should betray him! . . . Not fear or terror, but inexpressible misery, is the last portion of the

opium-eater. At certain stages it is not so. We know of a man called X—— who has often jumped out of bed —bounced like a column of quicksilver—at midnight, fallen on his knees and cried out, while the perspiration ran down his wasted face, and his voice waked all the house, 'O Jesus Christ, be merciful to me a sinner!' —so unimaginable had been the horror which sleep opened to his eyes. Such is for some time its effect. But, generally in its later stages, it is not horror, it is not fear: all these are swallowed up in misery."

Mrs. Baird Smith says of this period:—

"Though I knew that about 1844 he succeeded in attaining a final comparative escape from opium, I was not aware till I had carefully perused these scattered fragments that the date had been so distinctly marked as it is. In June of that year he brought it down to six grains, and with the most signal benefit. I would not say by any means that he never exceeded this afterwards, but I am very sure he never much exceeded it after he had convinced himself that anything in excess of it caused much of his nervous suffering. I remember that he used to set down these memoranda; but, as I have said, I hardly hoped to find the dates so fully marked."

The following note was addressed to a friend, and furnishes an additional incidental record of his experiences in reference to opium at that critical time:—

LASSWADE, *Wednesday, November* 13, 1844.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have but a moment to say how happy and flattered we shall feel by your taking the trouble of coming over from Edinburgh on Friday, and that without any shadow of inconvenience we can offer you a bed. As to writing, it is I who am the culprit, and *that* I should not have been but for

the tremendous arrears of wrath still volleying and whirling round upon me from retreating opium. Its flight is Parthian, "flying, it pursues." I am much improved as to health; but, from dire reactions of frantic nervousness, my sufferings (though intermitting) have been great.

I rejoice to find (indirectly, I mean, by your leaving home for a day or two) that Mrs. —— is well, and your young hope is prospering. Just as I write this, it strikes me that, except by seven weeks *minus* one day, he has accomplished one revolution, not as W. W.'s first daughter in that divine commemorating poem of "The *second* glory of the heavens," but of the primary and central.

The Lasswade coach brings you in so as to reach *us* (I understand) by half-past five. Of course we shall have the pleasure of seeing you to dinner.—Ever faithfully yours,

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

The following extract from a letter to Miss Mitford in 1842 reveals some of the pleasant amenities of his Lasswade life:—

More pleasant it must be if I try to give you some clue to the motive, the how and the why, of my residence in this place. My companions, as you know, are my three daughters, who, if it should be found that they had no other endowment from the bounty of nature, have this one, better perhaps than all that I could ask for them from the most potent of fairies, viz., that they live in the most absolute harmony I have ever witnessed. Such a sound as that of dissension in any shade or degree I have not once heard issuing from their lips. And it gladdens me beyond measure that all day long I hear from their little drawing-room intermitting sounds of gaiety and laughter, the most natural and spontaneous. Three sisters more entirely loving to each other, and more unaffectedly drawing their daily pleasures from sources that will always continue to lie within their power—viz., books and music—I have not either known or heard of. Our dwelling is a little cottage, containing eight rooms only, one of which (the largest), or what in London is called the *first* floor, is used as a drawing-room, and one about half the size, on the ground floor, a dining-room, but for a party of ten people at the utmost. Our garden gate is exactly seven

measured miles from the Scott Monument in Princes Street, Edinburgh. Lasswade, to which nominally we allocate ourselves, is in fact one mile and a half distant; but, as it is the nearest town possessing a market and a regular post-office (*Dalkeith*, which is very much larger, being distant three and a half miles or more), and as our means of communicating with Lasswade, though imperfect enough, are better than with any other place, it follows that Lasswade is the best address. . . . We keep only two servants (female servants), a housemaid and a cook, and with so narrow a command of labour, we are unable to send for our letters, the journey to and fro making a clear total of three miles' walking.

The following note, addressed to Mr. Young, banker, Lasswade, may be read with some interest, as bearing on a well-known article in "Tait" in 1845:—

Friday Night, December 13th, 1844.

My Dear Sir,—On Wednesday night, in rejoinder to your note of Wednesday morning, I wrote an answer. Unfortunately on Thursday morning, when it should have moved off into your hands, suddenly the discovery was made that I had written it upon the back of a tailor's bill. Fearing, therefore, that if the wrong side of the note presented itself first, you might be disturbed by finding that you owed twenty pounds more than you had supposed, I kept it back; and now, except as to date (and the tailor's little account), I copy the exact note of Wednesday night.

My Dear Sir,—I was myself aware from the first that it would not be prudent to advance upon unknown ground in this great question (so truly a *national* question) until I had obtained the benefit of your advice. Francis had also not forgotten to convey your caution on the subject a week or two back; so that I should not have proceeded in the dark. But I am not the less obliged to you for your note of this day; sensible that your kind intention was to prevent my throwing away any labour. In fact, a mistake as to the point of the Dick Bequest might have made it necessary to recast the whole paper.

I shall be most gratified by your coming over as you promise, and if a night after Monday, the 16th (any night whatever), would

suit your convenience, mine it would suit better than an earlier night.

I beg my respectful compliments to Mrs. Young; and am, my dear sir, ever your faithful servant,

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

P.S.—I have a handkerchief of yours, which Mrs. Young kindly insisted on my taking when I left your house. I reserve it for your use, because if you take it then (having come out as an import), it will go home as an export; whereas if I send it home now, it will go home as ballast, simply a burden, and of no use to anybody.

William Young, Esq., Lasswade.

As bearing on the point of a decisive escape from the excess of opium, we may be allowed here to present the reminiscences of one who was not a casual, but a constant and trusted visitor during the greater portion of the Lasswade life, and whose interest in Mr. de Quincey and the family became closer as time went on :—

"Few seem to be aware that Mr. de Quincey almost entirely overcame his craving for opium, and enjoyed an old age of quiet and repose, which contrasted in the most marked manner with the difficulties and the struggles of his earlier life—especially of those years just after the death of his wife, when his horizon was so cloudy and dark that he would undoubtedly have sunk under it had it not been for the high character, the energy, decision, and premature business capacity which his daughter Margaret manifested at that crisis. With what a struggle the excessive opium habit was conquered, it is difficult even to conceive. With a weak constitution, shattered nerves, and a depth of depression which constantly suggested suicide, it required no little strength of will to refrain from an indulgence which promised him at all events tem-

porary relief. Of such constitutions, one may well say with Burns:

'We know not what's resisted.'

"During his later years, as I have said, he had no anxiety about money, his income being larger than he required. He had a comfortable home always open to receive him, and, if he lived a good deal in Edinburgh, it was from some fancied advantage of being near his publishers; and he had got all his family comfortably provided for. Two of his sons, Horace and Frederick, went into the army; the former having gone through the Chinese campaign of 1840–42 under Sir Hugh Gough, and the latter through the Sutlej campaign of 1846; while a third, Francis, educated himself as a medical man under great difficulties, often walking in and out from Lasswade to attend his classes, as lodgings in Edinburgh would have been too great a strain on their income at that time.

"Mr. de Quincey's whole manner and speech were imbued with as much high-bred courtesy as I ever met with; and this was not a habit put on for ceremonious occasions, but was especially remarkable in his intercourse with servants or with any chance labourer he might meet on the road.

"His conversation was never a monologue, nor did he generally suggest the topics, but, making use of whatever might turn up, he never failed to raise the tone and to suggest some new and interesting points of view. I think I may safely say, that to no one could the trite aphorism, 'Nullam quod tetigit non ornavit,' be more truly applied.

"He had also, in a degree that I never saw exceeded except in one instance, the power of drawing out anything that was in those with whom he conversed. He suggested to them new views of subjects, and enabled them to assist him, as it were, in elucidating a subject, with no small satisfaction, as you may believe, to their self-esteem.

"He especially disliked controversy, as anything of the nature of strife was painful to his nature; but he liked discussion in its original sense,—to have a subject tossed about from one to another, becoming gradually better understood as each suggested some new view.

"At one time, I used to go very frequently to Mavis Bush in the evenings, and I generally walked home some miles across the country at late hours of the night; and in walking home quietly, I can yet remember with what pleasure I dwelt on these evenings, not so much from what I recalled of his conversation, however excellent, as from the sense that for some hours I myself had been raised to a higher level of thought and feeling than I could otherwise attain to.

"Any friends or admirers who came to visit him were always received most pleasantly and hospitably, and no house in the country had more attractions for people who cared for cultivated conversation. I recollect on one occasion ridiculing the idea of his being a Tory with the intense sympathy he had with progress; and his reply was, that if he were dug up two centuries hence, he would be found a perfect specimen of a 'fossil Tory.'"

Here, if we may judge by results, De Quincey's genius, cast once more amid surroundings so

far congenial, overpassed its former versatility and power. In addition to contributions to the "North British Review" in philosophy and literature, and such contributions to "Blackwood" as "Coleridge and Opium-eating" and "Suspiria de Profundis," which appeared in the course of the year 1846, he was particularly well represented in "Tait." He contributed to that magazine, in 1845, articles on Godwin, Foster, Hazlitt, and Shelley, and also a most characteristic paper on the Temperance Movement. In the course of 1846, appeared there also the remarkably vigorous and complete essay on "Christianity as an Organ of Political Movement," besides an ingenious article on the Antigone of Sophocles, *apropos* of its renewed presentation on the stage, and essays on Keats, Sir James Mackintosh, and the Marquis of Wellesley. Over and above these articles, there appeared in "Tait" between 1843 and 1846, the remarkable essay on "Protestantism," the series on "Greek Literature" and the "Greek Orators," as well as the touching episode of George and Sarah Green, which is embodied in the autobiographic sketches as one of the "Memorials of Grasmere."

The following letter will suffice to show that Professor Nichol in 1846 was desirous, on his own spontaneous movement, to draw closer the ties of intimacy with De Quincey:—

Wednesday Night, April 15, 1846.

My Dear M.,—Dr. Nichol, always to me a most interesting man, who and whose wife were at Glasgow most kind to me, is now become a far more interesting man: he has destroyed—utterly without mercy cut the lovely throat of—the *Nebular Hypothesis.* You know, of course, what is the *Nebular Hypo-*

thesis. Or if, by some strange chance you do *not*, then, and on that paradoxical assumption, Florence will explain it fully; or, in *her* default, Emily; or, if Emily should spend too many words over it, then call upon the cat; or, if *he* is galavanting, then perhaps the *rug* would have the goodness to explain.

Now this Dr. Nichol, who has been lecturing to Edinburgh for, I suppose, a fortnight, upon Astronomy, is, you are aware, Professor of Astronomy in the *University of Glasgow*. This Law Professor in the University of Glasgow has imbibed a strong desire to pay a visit to Lasswade. Upon that point he has communicated with me. Now, listen: would therefore it be inconvenient for him and myself to dine with you on SUNDAY, viz., April 19th? [What do you put so many lines under *Sunday* for, unless you think that nobody can hear if you do not cry at the top of your voice?]

I *have*, in my possession, and will restore, and have read, Fred's letter from the Punjaub. What a godsend!*

The next note suggests a touching incident:—

Thursday, January 1846.

My Dear Sir,—You do not know how much depth of interest I attached to the explanations which I made on Tuesday; yet I could neither explain the interest, nor sufficiently explain the explanations, in the fervour of a social party. But what I write for is—to communicate an incident to you, which renders all further explanation needless, which to *me* was most expressive, and which in one moment, by the most silent of languages, communicated to me the fact that you never *had* been offended by my two breaches of courtesy; breaches which were inevitable, but which you could not absolutely know to be such.

After you had gone away, I noticed a sweet girl, of most charming countenance, sitting at a distance; who she was, I had naturally no guess even. But to my utter surprise she, when taking leave of the company, came up under the guidance of Miss Blackwood, yet so obviously, also, by a spontaneous movement of goodness on her own part, for the sake of

* This refers to his son Frederick, who was an officer in the 70th Queen's Regiment, passing as interpreter to his regiment.

claiming an introduction to my unworthy self. When I found that this young lady was the daughter of Delta, I do not know that in my whole life I have been more profoundly touched. She, it appeared too evidently, had never associated my name with any shadow of a thought that I or any man could mean disrespect to her father; and this convinces me that you, also, had never harboured a thought of that nature.—Ever most faithfully yours, THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

In the next note, to Professor Lushington, he gives his opinion about the "Suspiria," which, considering his powers in self-criticism, may be regarded by not a few as having a special value.

No man can have descended more profoundly than myself into the consolations of utter solitude, no man can ever have weaned himself more entirely from *dependence* upon sympathy; but at the same time, perhaps, no man has ever felt it more keenly. . . .

I would not talk to any man of myself were the matter less interesting to my own feelings and those of my family, and would not that you might think it unfriendly if I claim your attention. Perhaps I told you, when you were last over at Lasswade, of the intention I had (and was then carrying into effect) to write another *Opium Confessionis;* or, if I did not tell you, it must have been only because I forbore to pester you too much with my plans—especially whilst unfinished, and liable to derangements more than one. Now, however, this particular plan, after occupying me for seven months of severe labour, is accomplished. Last Friday I received from the printer a sheet and something more (of "Blackwood's Magazine"), containing the first part out of four. It bears for its title, "Suspiria de Profundis; being a Sequel to the Confessions of an English Opium-Eater." And the separate title of this first part is—"The Affliction of Childhood." Why I mention beforehand a fact, which would at any rate have become known to you at the beginning of March, is partly for its interest to myself, and partly because I hope that it will possess some interest to you. At least whatever pleasure you may at any time have found in the original "Confessions," to which, in part, I fancy myself indebted for the great kindness shown to me in Glasgow by yourself and

Professor Nichol, will probably be trebled in this second series. One must not praise one's own writings positively, but comparatively one may. I, if at all I can pretend to judge in such a case, think them very greatly superior to the first. And three persons, who took the trouble to read this first part in MS., one of the three being Professor Wilson, have independently of each other communicated to me their sense of the superiority of these present "Confessions," by language very much stronger than that which I have used. The four parts, when published in Blackwood through March, April, May, June, and July, will be gathered into a volume without any delay, and introduced by a letter of some length to my three daughters. These final "Confessions" are the *ne plus ultra*, as regards the feeling and the power to express it, which I can ever hope to attain. And I should feel myself much disappointed if I failed to obtain a reading from yourself. As respects this *first* part, were it only for its subject, I count also on the honour of a reading from Mrs. Lushington.

In the following letter to Miss Mitford, we have some glimpses of his nervous sufferings, and also a hint, which we regard as more significant than it might seem at first sight, respecting the real bearing of opium on his sufferings.

My Dear Miss Mitford,—I am stung with compunction—exaggeration there is *not* in that word—when I figure to myself the sort of picture which any outside observer would just now frame of our several shares in the sort of intercourse going on between us. Your condescension on the one side in continuing to answer my daughter's letters, and on the other side my own lordly arrogance (as it certainly would appear to a stranger) in sitting at ease, and addressing you (if *I* can be said to do so at all) by proxy. One fact which my daughter (I believe) has communicated to you, serves to mitigate the atrocity of this picture—viz., that I *did* address to you, and all but finished, a pretty long letter. Perhaps she has not told you that since that I have written two others, in all three. Where are they? you ask. Hereafter I will explain that, and you will then understand that I not only know where they

are, but that they are recoverable. Why they disappeared for a time, and how they came to do so, is a point which my daughter could not explain, seeing that she is not at all aware of it. No purpose could be answered by my vainly endeavouring to make intelligible for my daughters what I cannot make intelligible for myself—the undecipherable horror that night and day broods over my nervous system. One effect of this is to cause, at uncertain intervals, such whirlwinds of impatience as precipitate me violently, whether I will or not, into acts that would seem insanities, but are not such in fact, as my understanding is never under any delusion. Whatever I may be writing becomes suddenly overspread with a dark frenzy of horror. I am using words, perhaps, that are tautologic; but it is because no language can give expression to the sudden storm of frightful revelations opening upon me from an eternity not coming, but past and irrevocable. Whatever I may have been writing is suddenly wrapt, as it were, in one sheet of consuming fire—the very paper is poisoned to my eyes. I cannot endure to look at it, and I sweep it away into vast piles of unfinished letters, or inchoate essays begun and interrupted under circumstances the same in kind, though differing unaccountably in degree. I live quite alone in my study, so nobody witnesses these paroxysms. Nor, if they did, would my outward appearance testify to the dreadful transports within. They interpret the case so far as it is made known to them by many practical results of my delay or my neglect, not indolence or caprice. At the worst they put it down amongst my foibles, for which I am sure they find filial excuses. Why should I interrupt their gaiety, which all day long sounds often so beautifully in my ears—a gaiety which at times is so pathetic to me as the natural result of their youth and their innocence—by any attempts to explain the inexplicable? Them it would sadden, and me it could in no way benefit. So I leave them always in cases where I have failed in any promised performance to make that excuse which the circumstances seem most to warrant.

Meantime, I foresee that your benignity, and the regard with which you honour me, will prompt, as your first question, What have I done, or am doing, towards the alleviation of the dreadful curse? Is there any key, you will say, to its original cause? Sincerely I do not believe there is. One inevitable suggestion at first arose to everybody consulted—viz., that it might be some

horrible recoil from the long habit of using opium to excess. But this seems improbable for more reasons than one. 1st. Because previously to any *considerable* abuse of opium—viz., in the year 1812,—I suffered an unaccountable attack of nervous horror which lasted for five months, and went off in one night as unaccountably as it had first come on in one second of time. I was at the time perfectly well, was at my cottage in Grasmere, and had just accompanied an old friend of Southey's (viz., Mr. Grosvenor Bedford) round the Lake district. . . .

In the early part of 1847, as we have said, he was in Glasgow, occupying his rooms at 79 Renfield Street. The note we next give has reference to a transference to the hands of his daughters of a portion of annuity from his uncle, Colonel Penson, on the death of his mother. The money was to allow his three daughters to enjoy a trip to the south to visit their father's relations, whom they had not seen. His proposal of himself as a tenant for the Lasswade cottage was no more than a bit of fun; for it had been arranged to shut up the house for a time, and he remained in Glasgow until his daughters returned.

79 Renfield Street, Glasgow,
Tuesday Night, February 23, 1847.

My Dear Margaret,—Your letter of Sunday last I found lying on the breakfast-table this morning. The money, which comes in April, viz., £42, 9s. 2½d., I make over to you in full; not reserving even the 2½d., as I am sure you will want the whole.

Now as to the house—hear *who* it is that I propose as your tenant: *myself*. Listen, and I will convince you that I am an eligible tenant. First, I engage to pay the £8 a month (lunar or calendar?): secondly, I engage to pay it in advance. And even more; for, as I shall receive a considerable sum in April, I will—*before* Shakspeare's birthday, St. George's day, April 23—at which day you will (upon your reckoning) still be in Lasswade—send at least *one* month's rent, viz., £8, if not *two*. This will give you a clear £50, if not near £60, exclusive of

Bath money, to commence the war upon. I will also send you the 12s. (is it not?) that I owe you, and compound interest upon the said capital sum of 12s.

Now, mark what will happen if you decline me for a tenant. I am satisfied that the *Bunyil-Carno* or *Bunyip** will hear of the opening made for introducing the sharp end of his wedge into the house. He will effect a lodgment. True, he is off to Ashantee; but what of *that?* He has agents all up and down the world, and spies. Vengeance is what he thirsts for upon me; and unless some Caboeser at Ashantee cuts his throat, it is by this fatal opening that he will bore his road into the very heart of vengeance. You know that nautical tale (q. Captain Marryat's?), where a dreadful awe settles upon all vessels in the Mediterranean, of a mysterious pirate, that suffered no tales to transpire from any ship captured by *him*,—and behold suddenly in a mist the narrator's ship finds herself captured, and in a very little time they ascertain that her captor is the dreadful pest of the sea, the pirate that walketh in darkness. So, let who will ostensibly treat for the house, the *bona fide* tenant will be Bunyip. I know you fancy that if I fell into arrears I might make a "moonlight flitting." But you are wrong *there*. And besides, if I *did*, that would not be half as bad as the Bunyip's leaving the *dry-rot* in the timbers of the house, which he would do to a certainty.

This plan will not at all interfere with my going to London in your company, which will be highly necessary towards the enabling you to see anything of that tremendous place, which will then be in its very noon of glory. The Opera-house opened in unprecedented splendour last week, and in April an opposition opera opens, not to speak of the great choral performances at Exeter Hall.

I have got the loveliest of *waltzes* for Emily. Mrs. Lushington has played it for me a dozen of times. It is a perfect

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* "*Bunyil-carno*:"—This mysterious creature, otherwise called the *Bunyip*, has never been described or figured by any naturalist; and for a sufficient reason, viz., that it has scarcely been seen by any white man, or only by unsteady hasty glimpses. It has, however, been *heard*; and the profoundest impression yet communicated of its dreadful powers and ferocity is derived from a case where it was *only* heard.

dream of beauty. The *written* notes she had not on searching, but has written for them to England.

Perhaps I shall write to Florence by this enclosure, if not, love to her and Emily.—Ever yours,

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

During this tour he wrote regularly, and expected regular letters in return. We give a few of his letters of that period. The "famishing" spoken of below arose from his incapacity for food.

Thursday, June 10, 1847.

MY DEAR M.,—I am rather disturbed that neither M. nor F. nor E. has found a moment for writing to me. Yet perhaps it was not easy. For I know very seriously, and have often remarked, how difficult it is to find a spare moment for some things in the very longest day, which lasts, you know, twenty-four hours; though, by the way, it strikes one as odd that the shortest lasts quite as many. I have been suffering greatly myself for ten days, the cause being, in part, some outrageous heat that the fussy atmosphere put itself into about the beginning of this month—but what *for*, nobody can understand. Heat always untunes the harp of my nervous system; and, oh heavens! how electric it is! But, after all, what makes me so susceptible of such undulations in this capricious air, and compels me to sympathise with all the uproars and *miffs*, towering passions or gloomy sulks, of the atmosphere, is the old eternal ground, viz., that I am famished. Oh, what ages it is since I dined! On what great day of jubilee is it that Fate hides, under the thickest of tablecloths, a dinner for *me?* Yet it is a certain, undeniable truth, which this personal famine has revealed to me, that most people on the terraqueous globe eat too much. Which it is, and nothing else, that makes them stupid, as also unphilosophic. To be a great philosopher, it is absolutely necessary to be famished. My intellect is far too electric in its speed, and its growth of flying armies of thoughts eternally new. I could spare enough to fit out a nation. This secret lies—not, observe, in my hair; cutting off *that* does no harm: it lies in my want of dinner, as also of breakfast and supper. Being famished, I shall show this world of ours in the next five years something that it never saw before. But if I

had a regular dinner, I should sink into the general stupidity of my beloved human brethren.

By the way, speaking of gluttony as a foible of our interesting human race, I am reminded of another little foible, which they have, rather distressingly, viz., a fancy for being horribly dirty. If I had happened to forget this fact, it would lately have been recalled to my remembrance by Mrs. Butler, formerly Fanny Kemble (but I dare say you know her in neither form—neither as chrysalis nor butterfly). She, in her book on Italy, &c. (not too good, I fear), makes this "*observe*," in which I heartily agree—namely, that this sublunary world has the misfortune to be very dirty, with the exception of some people in England, but with no exception at all for any other island or continent. Allowing for the "some" in England, all the rest of the clean people, you perceive clearly, must be out at sea. For myself, I did not need Mrs. Butler's authority on this matter. One fact of my daily experience renews it most impertinently, and will not suffer me to forget it. As the slave said every morning to Philip of Macedon, "*Philip, begging your honour's pardon, you are mortal;*" so does this infamous fact say to me truly as dawn revolves, "*Tom, take it as you like, your race is dirty.*" The fact *I* speak of is this—that I cannot accomplish my diurnal ablutions in fewer minutes than sixty, at the least, seventy-five at the most. Now, having an accurate measure of human patience, as that quality exists in most people, well I know that it would never stand this. I allow that, if people are not plagued with washing their hair, or not at the same time, much less time may suffice, yet hardly less than thirty minutes I think. Professor Wilson tells on this subject a story of a Frenchman which pleases me by its *naïveté*—that is, you know, by its *unconscious* ingenuousness. He was illustrating the inconsistencies of man, and he went on thus—"Our faces, for instance, our hands—why, bless me! we wash them everyday: our feet, on the other hand—*never*." And echo answered —"*never*."

In the next note, will be found a reference to Mr. Grinfield, Rector of Clifton, of whom we have already spoken, and from whose letter detailing Winkfield school life we have quoted :—

Wednesday, September 8, 1847.

My Dear M.,—For a month I have been very ill, and am only just mending; viz., from a fever, not typhus, but perhaps as bad, caught I believe amongst a poor Irish family. They were one family amongst hundreds—lying out all the summer on the bridges over the Clyde, and on what is called "*the Green*," a sort of smaller Hyde Park. I talked with many; indeed, walking there, how could I help it? They fastened on me, not I on them; and this family in particular, that I talked with most, being from Galway, bore that picturesque Spanish cast of countenance which Spanish settlers have left in that country; though, I believe, it is now almost lost by diffusion. This Hispanico-Judaic appearance interested me; and I did not know until it was too late, that—though the parents were untouched—the children had a fever amongst them. I suppose it will be no pleasure to anybody that I should describe my intolerable sufferings for the last four weeks. So I delay the account for a century. Before this, however, I suffered so much from the summer heat, acting upon a system utterly famished of all nutriment (hares being of course gone, for they disappear a month earlier in *trebly* parsimonious Glasgow than in *doubly* parsimonious Edinburgh), that utter prostration seized me, and, which is far worse, utter nervousness; whence comes the reason that I have not written, or rather *sent* what I really did write, but left unfinished. Oh, the torments of endless famine! This inanition and prostration doubtless predisposed me to the contagion of fever, which indeed is sometimes *self*-generated by such a habit of body. Well, that job's jobbed. I mean, that explanation is made, which I should not have made except to make intelligible my silence.

I have received two letters from you, both of which were very entertaining to me, and I am much obliged to you for the trouble you took. The first was written immediately after reaching Bletchington; the second was that sent through Francis, in consequence of which it never reached me till August (I think about six weeks ago); *none has reached me since then*. Pray, let me know *where* you are, *how* you are, and what are your plans. From F. I gathered that last month would be spent at *Weston-super-Mare*. You would see Westhay, therefore, and Belmaduthie. Which reminds me to ask—Have you in Bath seen Mrs. Mackenzie? If you do

again (which *'again'* is premature, until it is settled that you have seen her at all), give my kind remembrances to her. From Clifton, Mr. Grinfield (who is, I think, rector or vicar or something of that place) wrote three months ago to renew our ancient intimacy, which has rather fallen into arrear, as you will think when I tell you that not one word have we exchanged —written word or spoken—in this present nineteenth century. The last time I saw him—spoke to him—shook hands with him —was in the city of King Bladud, viz., Bath (Pump-room, to wit), in the year of Christ 1800, which year has been many times proved by most mathematical arguments to be the undoubted property, or great toe, of the eighteenth century, without the smallest relationship to any century that *you* are acquainted with. Consequently, there is a huge gap, as you perceive, in my Grinfield friendship. Yet, if you should meet him, since his letter (besides being complimentary) was really kind, say everything in apology that you know so well—Glasgow Green, Galway-Spanish Jews, fever (not typhus), no dinner since shaking hands with him in the eighteenth century,—in short, everything that ought to account satisfactorily for postponing an answer to his letter. But perhaps I shall postpone it no longer. So that he will say, in that case, and in case of your meeting him, "O dear! you're quite misinformed; I've heard from him in the present century." Bath being so near, and he so much in company I believe, it is not unlikely that you may really meet. I will tell him, when I hear from you, at what date you will reach the city of the late King Bladud. Even Emily will hardly find out by subtraction when that King last saw company: it is a thing that requires algebra. He (not that royal blade, Bladud, but that reverend blade, Grinfield) would, I think, like to meet you; and *I* should like it. Not "like to meet you," I didn't mean *that*—I *have* met you at two or three parties—but like that you should meet him.

At the beginning of my fever I received a present which gave me real pleasure. It was from Walter Savage Landor: his last publication—a volume comprehending all his Latin poems that he wishes to own—and very prettily bound in odorous Russian leather. There is no author from whom I *could* have been more gratified by such a mark of attention.

Somewhere about the same time I received from an Edinburgh physician, Dr. Tait, who is the medical adviser of the

Edinburgh police, a request that I would add a preface or a few notes to a work he is bringing out on opium-eating. He introduced himself through Dr. Handyside of the College, who in some letters he has written to me says that the work is highly thought of by the Edinburgh Medical body, to whom it was privately read in MS. I readily consented—the proof sheets have since been sent to me as they issued. And I, on my part, have nearly finished an Appendix of 35 to 40 pp., some parts of which will make you laugh. Dr. and Mrs. Tait have since given me so pressing an invitation to visit them for as long as I choose, that I shall go, and should have gone before this. How is Florence? I heard with anxiety that she was rather what people call *delicate*. I hope by this time, through sea-air, &c., she has become *in*delicate. Love to her and Emily. Write soon.—Farewell, dear M.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

Sunday Night (the *Sa*wbath), *Sept.* 19, 1847.

MY DEAR FLORENCE,—I received M.'s letter, so entertaining—indeed (as relating to a man so original and full of genius as W. S. L.) so interesting—on the 17th, though dated the 12th. One day's delay was due to the servant, who being busy in cleaning a grate, bade the postman place the letter on a shelf in the kitchen; and subsequently being summoned abroad by the sun and the wind to dry her week's washing (on which mission she staid away till dark), forgot the letter until next day. See upon what accidents things turn. Poor Mrs. Jordan dying in solitude at Versailles—wearing away day by day from that dreadful torment of nervous frenzy so unknown to the world generally, so bitterly known to me, and here and there a martyr—actually *died* in consequence of the mail from England not bringing a letter from one of her daughters, which letter arrived some few hours after her death. Who knows but the wretched French maid-of-all-work, being busy in cleaning a grate, bade the postman lay that filial letter on that kitchen shelf—begrimed, no doubt, like this Scotch one, with dust of centuries—and then going out with the "buckbasket" to the Versailles Green, forgot it until the poor lady was a corpse? There are, however, two days still to account for. Yet, after all, on a journey of four hundred miles this loss is less in proportion to that which

generally occurred upon the fifty-three between Lasswade and Glasgow.

Only about fifty to sixty miles now remain unfinished to connect Glasgow with London and Bath on this western route. For that space you have a dashing mail-coach, one of the last expiring lamps on that far more interesting system of locomotion. In November, if the weather continues favourable for working, even this last gap in the chain will be filled up. But stop! You cannot wait till November, and besides, you are engaged to dinner at Clapham on Michaelmas-day—a day sacred to that vulgarest of all luxuries, a roasted goose, whom may Jupiter confound, and all that worship such a vile idol, sacred also to the Archangel Michael. On consideration, I think you will patronise the rail, which also, I really believe, curves round by York—a grander thing than you have yet seen. By the way, it makes me laugh to think what it is that you *have* seen of London—a vast assortment, I should think, of chimney-cans, if even those. I daresay you saw several cabmen also, and cabs to match. You know the French phrase of *burning* a place—used in the sense of passing through it with burning wheels. "*Nous brûlames Londres*," says a French tourist, meaning that he went right through London without stopping on his road to Bath. "Oh, the monster!" says an English critic; "did I ever think that the rage on account of Waterloo could carry a man such lengths?" Why, no: it *is* odd; but odder still that you, with no Waterloo hatreds, should follow this incendiary example.

Landor! I cannot say how much I was pleased with your Landorian rencontre—so gratifying in connection with the memory (for to you the knowledge of his name will be *chiefly* a memory) of a man really so illustrious. Of the two opinions which M. mentions as having surprised but pleased her in Landor, one at least is powerfully expressed and illustrated in his English "Conversations:" that, I mean, about Napoleon. It is also repeated with vigorous scorn in his Latin poems. The other, about Sir W. S., may not have been expressed from considerations of courtesy, but I was sure of his feeling it. The opinion about Nell is also expressed in his English works. I am far from agreeing with him. Whatever may be the separate beauty of Nell's position as to character and situation in relation to her grandfather, it is dreadfully marred to me by the extravagance and caricature (as so often happens in Dickens) of the gambling

insanity in the old man. Dickens, like all novelists anxious only for effect, misunderstands the true impulse in obstinate incorrigible gamesters: it is not faith, unconquerable faith, in their luck; it is the very opposite principle—a despair of their own luck—rage and hatred in consequence, as at a blind enemy working in the dark, and furious desire to affront this dark malignant power; just as in the frenzy of hopeless combat you will see a man without a chance, and knowing that he does but prolong his adversary's triumph, yet still flying again with his fists at the face which he can never reach. Without love on the old man's part to Nell, hers for him would be less interesting; and *with* love of any strength, the old fool could not *but* have paused. The risk was *instant:* it ruined Nell's hopes of a breakfast; it tended to a jail. Now Alnaschar delusions take a different flight—they settle on the future. Extravagance and want of fidelity to nature and the possibilities of life are what everywhere mar Dickens to me; and these faults are fatal, because the *modes* of life amongst which these extravagances intrude are always the absolute realities of vulgarised life as it exist in plebeian ranks amongst our countrymen at this moment. Were the mode of life one more idealised or removed from our own, I might be less sensible of the insupportable extravagances.

But why do I trouble you with all this? Look! before I meant to write, it was already written; and that's the reason; for ink, like blood, cannot be washed out. During my illness, having no books but Mr. Landor's Latin poems, which reached me at its beginning, I read them at times with great interest. It is a pity that so many fine breathings of tenderness and beauty should perish like the melodies of the regal Danish boy, because warbled "in a forgotten tongue." There is one which beautifully commemorates his mother—apparently an interesting creature and of ancient lineage. I collect from it that she was an heiress, who had the pleasure to step in, as a bride, for the critical rescue of the Landor estates and mansion at the moment when else the parties who held a mortgage upon them would have foreclosed. The name *Savage*, as I infer, was derived from her; and I presume from the context that she belonged to the Savages of the Earl of Rivers.

M. tells me in a P.S. that you had read "Schlosser." By what strange fatality is it that, if I write a hurried paper, by

its subject necessarily an inferior one, some friend is sure to show it to you? And no friend thought it worth while to show you the "Spanish Nun's" passage across the Andes, or the "Joan of Arc," which, however, are now going to reappear, with a few words of preface telling the public what *I* think of them, and what place *I* expect for them.

However, my plans far transcend all journalism high or low. And through fifty different channels I will soon make this mob of a public hear on both sides of its deaf head things that it will not like.

Wednesday Morning, October 13, 1847.

My Dear M.,—Early this morning (that is, about eight o'clock), I received your letter of the ——, of the whatth? For you have not *dated* it, which you know in my eyes is almost a capital offence, and to be expiated only by continual tears and contrition.

You are quite wrong in supposing that I should delay to read it. It is only letters that make me unhappy which I defer, until by accident, perhaps, they never get read at all. Complimentary letters, and letters of amusement from their news or their comments, I read instantly. Yours are in the latter class, and interest me greatly. Your former *very* interesting letter, in which you reported Mr. Landor's visit, &c., I wrote a pretty long answer to; only by misfortune, being not quite finished, it dropped into a chaos of papers occupying a sofa, from which I have never extricated it; having, indeed, the excuse of illness (from the nervous reaction of my fever), so excessive that I have had no moment's peace until, by writing to Dr. Handyside of Edinburgh, to obtain his prescription for compounding the hemlock, which once before did me so much good.

I will write the letter you wish to Mr. B., and express the gratitude which I feel, if only you will give me his address. Or am I to send it through you? You are too unjust to yourselves in ascribing his very earnest and judicious attentions to the filiality in which you stand to myself. Had you been gawky girls, with brown leathern skins, incipient beards, and shrewish voices, he would, maugre the filiality, have contented himself with writing a note to C., signed, Yours, ladies, with high consideration, and indeed veneration,—X. Y.

Prior Park was once a place well known to me. We, that is,

myself and a schoolfellow, had the privilege of the *entrée* to the grounds. Your aunt J. was too young in those days to know anything of an arrangement which did not interest little misses in the nursery. But in olden times Prior Park was interesting from its connection with Pope. Allan the Quaker, whom Pope (wishing to eulogise) absurdly handed down to posterity as "*low-born* Allan" (think of *that* for a New-Year's gift; but it was altered afterwards on finding that the low-born gentleman found this compliment hard of digestion), was proprietor of Prior Park about a hundred and seven years ago. Thither Pope came to visit him with his testy female friend, Miss Martha Blount. Miss M. got up a quarrel with the female servants, bounced into the room to Pope, said, "I'll not stay another hour in this house," and, in spite of Pope's natural desire to have had explanations, &c., off she went, dragging Pope with her; and at his death (about 1744) she forced him to insult Allan in his will. There you see a specimen of your sex's fiery rashness. Many years ago I saw by the newspapers that Prior Park had become a Roman Catholic institution—College is it not? It was an elegant object seen from the lateral streets going off from Great Pulteney Street.

But concerning the Landor visit. At the date of your Bath letter you were under sailing orders for his house. What came of it? Did you sail? or how? Why did you not come back by the Newcastle Railway? On the whole, now it is over, was your English visit satisfactory?

I am writing an elaborate article on an anonymous book (ascribed by report to three bishops, that is, to some *one* of the three, but the favourite amongst the betters is Dr. Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford). It is entitled "A Vindication of Protestant Principles," and a strange book for a bishop to write. What changes does time work! You would rather suppose it written by a German infidel in many parts. But I mention it, because the *press waits* for my MS. However, the press is quite used to waiting for me, and I daresay never takes cold. So don't distress yourself for having been the cause of this little inconvenience, which is not worth mentioning, only that it compels me to break off.

How is Florence? Did her sea-bathing benefit her at all? Love to her and to Emily. Write as soon as possible, and *date twice over* in atonement for past crimes.—Ever yours, my dear M.,

T. DE QUINCEY.

The following note refers to a young Greek gentleman with whom De Quincey at this time had some pleasant intercourse :—

September 12, 1848.

My Dear Sir,—Under circumstances which oblige me to write in a hurry, I take the liberty of introducing to your notice an accomplished young Grecian, Mr. Neocles Jaspis Mousabines. He honours your name and services to this generation; and, from my personal intercourse with him, I can undertake to say that he has been powerfully and unaffectedly impressed by the study of your works. Equally master of modern Greek and English as regards both writing and speaking, he may probably find or make opportunities for diffusing his own deep impressions amongst the more intellectual of his countrymen. I have ventured, therefore, to suppose that you may find a pleasure in conversing with him; whilst, on the other hand, Mr. Mousabines is prepared to understand that, from the pressure of strangers on your time, or from your state of health, or from accidents of personal convenience, you may find a difficulty in doing so, without meaning any sort of slight to himself.—Ever, my dear sir, your faithful friend and servant,

Thomas de Quincey.

Wm. Wordsworth, Esq., Rydal Mount.

On being consulted by a young friend respecting the possibility and the advisability of a literary career, he took occasion to defend the literary class from the aspersion of jealousy, and to show that there may be growth of power as well as of experience :—

Want of experience, therefore, or insufficient experience, may render my judgment in such a case partially wrong. But at least I can promise you an honest judgment; and next week, when I shall be less oppressed by calls upon my time, this shall be at your service. By an honest judgment I do not mean to insinuate that authors in general are capable of feeling any bias from jealousy lest they should be the means of introducing a fresh competitor into the paths of literature. Far from it.

The literary body, as a whole, is honourable and generous. And very few, indeed, I am sure, would give a false report under *this* bias. But most men addict themselves to speaking cynically of contemporary literature, as every age and generation in succession speaks cynically of itself. They persuade themselves that all things are amiss; that the spirit of originality is extinct; and, as every age in turn sees most of the imitative spirit which gathers round the heel of power, these men fancy *that* peculiar to their own times which has merely been brushed away from the face of past times by its own intrinsic perishableness. Now, at least I can hold myself to be free from these too common prepossessions. I see more to admire, more power and vital force of every kind, in my own generation than in any other. And I refuse to be duped by the scenical effects of distance or abstraction. It does not follow that our literature is in a good state. I think it far otherwise; but its faults are not from want of power.

With respect to the other question, not only is it much more difficult because a *personal* question, allowing for the utmost candour in both parties to such an inquiry, but it is really a dangerous one for any peremptory judgment, and for a reason which, perhaps, you will stare at. The notion is universal that talent, *a fortiori* genius, never grows. All which a man has he has from the beginning. Growth takes place in knowledge, in skill, in address, and many artificial qualities; but not, it is supposed, in downright power. Now I beg you to suppose that it is no love of paradox which forces me into any opposite opinion. I will not contend as to the absolute metaphysical realities of the case. Whether genius, like coal and diamonds in some theories, is always in a secret state of growth, or whether it is only that a veil clears away from the mind, leaving what was always there more conspicuously visible, either way the result is the same; experience of life, larger comprehension of truth, above all, solitude, grief, meditation, *do* effectually bring out powers in the adult not conjecturally visible in the boy or the very young man.

There is no record of any such struggles as those of 1844 at a later date, though in 1848 we find that he made an attempt to abstain totally. The relief he had found,

after a period of agony, from the reduction of 1844, it doubtless was that led him to such an experiment; but opium had laid too terrible a spell upon him to be lightly shaken off for ever. Say, rather, the chronic weakness or neuralgic affection of the stomach was so established, that this was more than could be reasonably hoped for. Here is one of his records at this time:—

Mem.—That this day, Thursday, November 23, 1848—being my twenty-fourth day of abstinence—after having descended into utter despair, the 17th to the 22d November having been days of profoundest suffering and utter hopelessness—(rigid obstruction, throbbing without intermission, and sub-inflammation)—to my utter surprise the misery passed off after breakfast, not fully and consciously until about one or half-past one; so it continued until after cocoa, when for an hour or so a reaction of misery set in, which again passed off; and now, half-past eleven at night, I am almost as well as before cocoa. On the fifteenth day also (together with the day after or before) I had an intermission. But now it appears more strongly that the cause of my misery must be the alcohol, and the restoration dependent on the offing obtained from this alcohol. If this is the truth, then it will go on; the advance will not, perhaps, be continuous, but intermitting and *per saltum;* but it will burst out more and more at intervals like a fugue, until the restoration shall be perfect.

After having at this time abstained wholly for sixty-one days, he was compelled to return to its moderate use, as life was found to be insupportable; he himself recording afterwards that he resumed its use, on the warrant of his deliberate judgment, as the least of two evils; and there is no further record of any attempt at total abstinence. His indulgences in opium after this date were, however, very limited.

The ten last years embrace a period of quiet and steady activity. He was well cared for, whether at

Lasswade or at Lothian Street, Edinburgh, and abandoned to a great extent his wandering propensities. In these years he accomplished some bits of work which students are as much inclined to prize as the earliest and freshest of his efforts—notably, several of those chapters of Recollections of Infancy, which are now embodied in the volumes of "Autobiographic Sketches." He returned to Lasswade in the end of 1847, and lived there without intermission till the beginning of 1852.

Some of his peculiar habits, in spite of the loving tendance and care of which he was now the subject, were, however, persevered in. He still sat and wrote at night, refreshing himself with tea or coffee in large quantity—went to bed in the early hours, woke at midday, and devoted a large part of the time while daylight lasted to wandering about the country, or in the pleasant, lonely lanes in the neighbourhood of his house. Or, if by any chance he was unable thus to gratify himself, he would take compensation by indulging in a starlight ramble. Many, doubtless, are the light-headed country bumpkins, who, returning from adventures of love or whisky, have been scared by his thin light figure in odd habiliment, his feet in list shoes—his favourite wear—advancing silently and suddenly upon them in the darkness. It must be of this period of which Professor Masson has made the following record, in the course of a most interesting description of De Quincey and his genius:—

"Who in Edinburgh, or anywhere else, would not have delighted in the prospect of getting the Opium-Eater to his house, to dinner with a few

friends, or more quietly afterwards, so as to have an evening with him? Nothing was easier *if you knew the way.** To invite him by note or personally was of no use. He would promise—promise most punctually, and, if he saw you doubted, reassure you with a dissertation on the beauty of punctuality; but when the time came, and you were all met, a hundred to one you were without your De Quincey. But send a cab for him, and some one in it to fetch him, and he came meekly, unresistingly, as if it were his doom, and he conceived it appointed that, in case of resistance, he should be carried out by the nape of the neck. It was no compliment to *you.* Anybody might have taken possession of him, unless by inadvertence time had been given him to escape by the back-window, under pretext of dressing. So, if you knew the way, you had your De Quincey. And was it not a treat? Hour after hour there was the stream, the sweet and subtle eddying-on of the silver talk. . . .

"The first time I saw him was, most pleasantly, one evening in a room high up in one of the tall houses of the Old Town. He came in charge of a strong, determined man, who took all the necessary trouble. There were but a few present, and all went on nicely. In addition to the general impression of his diminutiveness and fragility, one was struck with the peculiar beauty of his head and forehead, rising disproportionately high over his small, wrinkly visage and gentle, deep-set eyes. In his talk, which was in the form of really harmonious

* Italics here are ours, for the point has a certain special value.

and considerate colloquy, and not at all in that of monologue, I remember chiefly two incidents. The birthday of some one present being mentioned, De Quincey immediately said, 'Oh, that is the anniversary of the battle of so-and-so,' and he seemed ready to catch as many birthdays as might be thrown him on the spot, and almanack them all round in a similar manner from his memory. The other incident was his use of a phrase very beautiful in itself, and which seemed characteristic of his manner of thinking. Describing some visionary scene or other, he spoke of it as consisting of 'discs of light, and interspaces of gloom,' and I noticed that, with all the fine distinctness of the phrase, both optical and musical, it came from him with no sort of consciousness of its being out-of-the-way in talk, and with no reference whatever to its being appreciated or not by those around him, but simply because, whoever he might be talking to, he would be thinking like De Quincey. That evening passed, and though I saw him once or twice again, it is the last sight that I remember next best. It must have been, I think, in 1846, on a summer afternoon. A friend, a stranger in Edinburgh, was walking with me in one of the pleasant, quiet, country lanes near Edinburgh. Meeting us, and the sole moving thing in the lane beside ourselves, came a small figure, not untidily dressed, but with his hat pushed far up in front of his forehead, and hanging on his hind-head, so that the back rim must have been resting on his coat collar. At a little distance I recognised it to be De Quincey; but, not considering myself entitled to interrupt his meditations, I only whispered the information to my friend,

that he might not miss what the look at such a celebrity was worth. So we passed him, giving him the wall. Not unnaturally, however, after we passed, we turned round for the pleasure of a back view of the wee, intellectual wizard. Whether my whisper and our glances had alarmed him, as a ticket-of-leave man might be rendered uneasy in his solitary walk by the scrutiny of two passing strangers, or whether he had some recollection of me (which was likely enough, as he seemed to forget nothing), I do not know; but we found that he, too, had stopped, and was looking round at us. Apparently scared at being caught doing so, he immediately wheeled round again, and hurried his face toward a side-turning in the lane, into which he disappeared, his hat still hanging on the back of his head. That was my last sight of De Quincey; but a good many years afterwards I had the pleasure of receiving, in a circuitous manner, a kind word of recognition from him, on a ground independent of any recollection he may have retained of my juvenile Edinburgh existence. This was just before his death, and one was glad to know by report that, then in his old age, this eccentric man of genius, this wise, erudite, and beautiful spirit—this English essayist, the real worth of whose remains, as compared with those of Lord Macaulay, will be found, I venture to say, as that of a mass of wrought silver against an equal mass of gold and copper—had let his wandering habits be brought within bounds, and was ministered to by the hands of willing affection."

It will not, perhaps, seem out of place here to intro-

duce some reminiscences by Mrs. Baird Smith, as they chiefly deal with the Lasswade life:—

"My father's love for children, and power of winning their confidence, was one of his loveliest characteristics. My own first awaking to the fact that I had a father grew out of the restless nights of a delicate childhood, when my small ill-regulated uproar was sure to bring the kind, careful arms which rescued the urchin from a weariful bed and the wisdom of nursery discipline, and brought it to the bright warm room, and the dignity and delight of 'sitting up with papa.' This papa, after a petting and soothing process of inexpressible sweetness, and coffee well loaded with sugar, had always some delightful book, exquisite to the sense of smell, as a book always was to the family nose, and to the eyes, because of pictures, about which, when they became too amazing for the restraining sense that 'papa must not be disturbed,' he had always something wonderful or beautiful to tell. The leaves of this book had generally to be cut, and much breathless joy came of the careful teaching how this was to be done, so that there might be no ragged edges; reverence for the person of a book being among our early lessons. The triumph of the small operator and the applause of the audience over a well-executed work was the chorus to each opened page. In my memory there seems an unending supply of these books; but perhaps really little was done, as the little creature fell asleep sooner than was its heroic intent, which was to 'sit up *all* night with papa.'

"As a girl between ten and twelve, I was his constant and almost only companion, and was never so happy as with him. The unfailing gentleness of his temper, and

tender attention to the feeblest of girlish thoughts and interests, the unconscious way to both of us in which he turned these into high meanings, without overshooting the power of the child, was one of those wonderful and gracious gifts, like his power of conversation, which it was as impossible to catch and bottle for future use, as it would have been to have bottled the sunshine of those days.

"This humbling of himself without effort or any appearance of condescension to little children, was not confined to his own children, nor, with all his delicate refinement, to the children of any class; the most nefarious baby in the arms of the most impossible of mothers was a sure passport to, it might often be, his last shilling. And nearly the last time we were together, his almost constant companion for some time every day was the nephew of one of our maids, a child of about four, who, solely for the pleasure of conversation, walked round and round a dull little garden with him. Of this boy I remember one story which amused us. He had asked my father, 'What d'ye ca' thou tree?' To which my father, with the careful consideration which he gave to any question, began, 'I am not sure, my dear, but I think it may be a *Lauristinus;*' when the child interrupted him with some scorn, 'A *Lauristinus!* Lad, d'ye no ken a *rhododendron?*' The 'lad' must have been about seventy at the time.

"One of my memories of him in bright summer mornings was his capturing my baby sister, fresh from her bath, possibly because there had been some slight fracas over that operation between her and her nurse, and dancing her about the garden; the child, with its

scanty white raiment and golden head, looking like a butterfly glowing among the trees.

"My father's habits were simple, almost to asceticism. From the neuralgic suffering, which led to his first taking opium, he early lost all his teeth; and, from the extreme delicacy of his system, he could eat nothing less capable of perfect mastication than bread, so that only too often a little soup or coffee was his whole dinner. He was able to take very little wine, even according to the standard of the present day. His dress, unfortunately, he neither cared for himself, nor would he let others care for it." I say unfortunately, because this carelessness gave rise among punctilious people, unaccustomed to eccentric habits, to an impression of poverty for which there was no foundation. It might be that a thought occurred to him in the midst of some of his irregular processes of dressing or undressing (I should say, some thought generally did strike him at that time), and he would stop with his coat just taken off or not put on, without stockings at all, or with one off and one on, and becoming lost in what grew out of this thought, he would work on for hours, hardly even noticing the coffee, which was his chief support at such times. In the midst of this absorbing work, would arrive visitors, of whom there were many, probably from such a distance that they could not be turned back without sight of the object of their long pilgrimage; upon which my father, with the unaffected courtesy which was one of the great charms of his character, would appear at once, rather than keep them waiting while he put on the other stocking, or whatever might be wanting, or, which was just as likely, in the wrong place,

giving rise to awed impressions of poverty with some, while those who could withdraw their unaccustomed eyes from the nakedness of the land, as expounded by his feet, might have seen in his surroundings such signs of scrupulous neatness, sufficient comfort and refinement, as must have reassured them on this point. For, not long after my mother's death, my father, feeling his own singular incapacity for the management either of a household or of young children, and always most willing, by self-sacrifice, to further any plan for their good, had consented to give up to the management of his eldest daughter, still but a girl, a small fixed income, and by her admirable judgment and honourable economy, there was from that time always a comfortable, cheerful home, wholly free from embarrassment, where he was anxiously looked for as giving us the best chance of gratifying those tastes which association with him had awakened in us. From this time I believe he had no fresh difficulties to hamper him; those which remained being rather the remnants of previous mismanagement, the growth of two phases of extravagance, which, the more we think of them, the more they seem the result of some strange failure of intellect—they were so purposeless, and brought such unspeakable pain to his own higher nature and to those he loved. From the first of these phases, which can only be described as a wanton charity, no doubt he did gain some comfort for his own exquisite suffering for the suffering of others. His presence at home was the signal for a crowd of beggars, among whom borrowed babies and drunken old women were sure of the largest share of his sympathy; but he refused it to none, and he was often wearied by the

necessity he laid upon himself of listening to all the woes which were heaped upon him. This, of course, was that development of his keen sympathy with suffering which cost him least; there were others which became very serious, but which his own sanguine belief in his own powers of work always led him firmly to believe he should be able to meet; and indeed he was a hard and unceasing worker, but the character of his work points to the impossibility of his being able generally to produce it up to time.

"His other extravagance grew out of the morbid value he set upon his papers and their not being disturbed. He was in the habit of accumulating these till, according to his own description, he was 'snowed up,' which meant, when matters came to such an extremity that there was not a square inch of room on the table to set a cup upon, that there was no possibility of making his bed for the weight of papers gathered there, that there was no chair which could be used for its legitimate purpose, and that the track from the door to the fireplace, which had always to be considered, had been blotted out, even for his own careful treading; then he locked the door upon this impracticable state of things, and turned elsewhere; leaving his landlady, if simple and honest, fearfully impressed with the mysterious sin of meddling with his papers, but, if dishonest, with such a handle for playing upon his morbid anxieties, as was a source of livelihood. At his death there were, I believe, about six places where he had these deposits, it may be imagined at what expense.

"Such a thing has been known as his gradually in this way 'papering' his family out of a house, but in later

years his daughters in the home at Lasswade were wary, and the smallest deposit of papers was carefully handed down into the one irrecoverable desert in which he worked when he left them after spending the evening with them, which he almost always did. These evenings were very pleasant. The newspaper was brought up, and he, telling in his own delightful way, rather than reading the news, would, on questions from this one and that of the party, often including young friends of his children, neighbours, or visitors from distant places, illuminate the subject with such a wealth of memories, of old stories, of past or present experiences, of humour, of suggestion, even of prophecy, as by its very wealth makes it impossible to give any taste of it. It was the happiest flow of real conversation growing out of the circumstances of the moment, in which the youngest and shyest of the party, encouraged by his gentleness and power of sympathy, that made him catch in a moment what the stammering youth or maiden might wish to say, took their part.

"He was not a reassuring man for nervous people to live with, as those nights were exceptions on which he didn't set something on fire, the commonest incident being for some one to look up from work or book to say casually, 'Papa, your hair is on fire,' of which a calm 'Is it, my love?' and a hand rubbing out the blaze was all the notice taken. One evening a maid rushed in upon two quiet girls with a horrified face and in a burst of smoke to announce that Mr. de Quincey's room, by this time on the point of being 'snowed up,' was on fire. Some important papers and a little money were secured, and then they descended to the scene of action to find

that a hard frost had taken away all chance of help from water; but the Mississippi might have flowed past his door, and Mr. de Quincey would have had none of it, as it would have ruined the beloved papers. He therefore determined to conquer the fire without water, or to perish with them. All he would take in was a heavy rug; and he locked the door in dread of the abhorred water being poured in, in spite of the injury the fire might cause. Presently we were assured that all danger was over, though, in the presence of occasional bursts of smoke, and a very strong smell of fire, it argued an extraordinary confidence in his power of manœuvring with that dread element that we all went to bed and slept.

"The fascination of my father's presence must have, in some measure, conveyed itself into his writings, for from the days of my girlhood I recall the difficulties that sometimes arose from a surplus of visitors, and his concern lest any of them—those from a distance especially—who desired to come and see him, might suffer inconvenience or the appearance of being treated with discourtesy. Many were the Americans who favoured us with their society, particularly during the later years, but I do not remember a single instance in which anything but pleasant recollections were left behind. And often, when we were away from home, we met with unexpected attentions, simply and solely, we believe, on our father's account, from those who had met him or had become interested in his works. One of the most memorable cases of this kind was our meeting Mr. W. S. Landor in Bath in 1847, when we were paying our first visit to our father's relatives in the south. My sisters and I were then with our aunt at Weston;

and Mr. Landor having heard we were there, called to invite us to his house. We found him delightful company, as did my aunt. She was fond of gardening, and had a very fine garden, which Mr. Landor particularly admired; and this led to an expression so characteristic, that I risk a slight digression in order to record it. On his noticing some fine trees, my aunt remarked that they were not so beautiful as they were, as they had recently been lopped. On this Mr. Landor immediately said, 'Ah! I would not lop a tree; if I had to cut a branch, I would cut it down to the ground. If I needed to have my finger cut off, I would cut off my whole arm!' lifting up that member decisively as he spoke. Landor was then living in St. James' Square, and we visited him there.

"As expressions of my father's great concern lest visitors should have cause to feel in any way slighted, I may give here some illustrative letters. They will, I think, speak for themselves:—

To Mr. Josiah Quincey.

Tuesday Morning, June 19, 1855.

My Dear Sir,—I am concerned to learn that you have had so much trouble and so little success in seeking for my scattered household. My two sons are in Brazil and India; my two youngest daughters are visiting at Boston in Lincolnshire; my eldest daughter is transplanted by marriage to Tipperary in the south of Ireland; and I myself am in lodgings for the moment in Edinburgh. I received your obliging note on Saturday night. On the next day, being Sunday, I forbore to call upon you; because, though I for my own part do not scruple to pay and receive visits on a Sunday, I was not entitled to assume that you took the same view on such a subject as myself. Throughout yesterday, from an early hour in the morning, I was unavoidably occupied by a troublesome

law affair relating to a guarantee for house-rent which I had been imprudent enough to give. To-day, I am altogether at your service; and as I should most unwillingly miss any opportunity of seeing a member of your distinguished family, I would request of you to inform the bearer *orally*—so as to evade all trouble in writing—at what hour of the day I should be likely to find you at home.—I remain, my dear sir, your faithful servant, THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

Sunday, June 24, 1855.

MY DEAREST FLORENCE,—Last night,—viz., Saturday night, and the clock being on the stroke of ten, when every successive minute was bringing *Hobson's choice* into wider empire,—I remembered that I had no paper; and seeing at that moment a solitary stationer's shop—"the last rose of summer"—still open, I went in and bought a *slip* (which means 12 sheets, or half an English quire) of this strange-looking note-paper. From Brobdingnag* it must have been imported; and might be used appropriately in writing to the children of Anak, but seems as affronting when used in addressing a young lady, as it would be to send her a ledger two feet high by way of pocket souvenir. So, to heal the affront, I rehearse the history of the case. The letters of the Anakim, meantime, will not necessarily pay extra postage; a tall letter is not, therefore, a heavy letter. But a worse fate may possibly threaten this letter,—viz., that it may founder in attempting to enter the narrow port of an ordinary envelope.

But stop! Suddenly at this point it occurred to me that it might be as well, before embarking more words upon my frail sheet of paper, to settle the question whether any envelope in my possession would meet the extra demand upon it. Would the port receive the ship? Naturally, therefore, I directed a more considerate and searching eye upon my letter, and found to my astonishment that I was—whilst supposing myself writing upon a sheet of Cyclopean dimensions—actually half-way through a letter of very commonplace quality upon a very commonplace size of paper. Heard ever man or woman the like of that? Starting with the strong preconception that

* "Brobdingnag,"—people generally write *Brobdignag;* but *that* is a faulty spelling.

I had no paper but that one forementioned slip of pre-Adamitic proportions, I had persisted unconsciously in viewing my actual paper through a visionary magnifying glass. It turned out upon examination that exactly one sheet remained of a common-sized slip purchased some ten days ago; and this slip being accidentally of the same thin quality as the mammoth slip purchased last night, naturally enough, when stumbling by mistake upon this remainder unit of a vanished flock, I was misled by the thinness into supposing myself ranging over the vast Asiatic steppes of the last night's purchase—huge Megatherium heaths or chases, where one has room to misspell over half an acre, and yet to redeem one's credit along the ample spaces in the rear—room to talk enormous nonsense for hours, and yet to have it all forgotten before the ending—room for being a baddish fellow, and for sowing one's wild oats, in the first page, and yet long before cutting into p. 4 room for a huge sweep round into repentance, and for wheeling into the character of a saint. Now, that I should have made this mistake, and should unconsciously have submitted to it so long as nothing arose to force any keen attention upon the true proportions of the paper, is such an oversight as may be pardoned to human stupidity, and especially on a sultry day. But that, *after* my consciousness in a bright magnetic current had been forced upon the realities of the case, I should continue to read in the object before me the features belonging to the imaginary object, seems to me a preternatural stupidity, and perhaps worthy of being advertised in the *London Gazette.* I fancy to myself at this point Miss Mary Gee, whose fine sense in times past sometimes wore a satiric aspect, saying, "Now, if not by himself, but by us, this oversight had been charged upon him as a stupidity, he would have been angry." No, he wouldn't. O my dear Florence, I rattle in order to beguile my deadly nervousness. But I suffer what I cannot describe. Not the less I strive, to the utmost of what I *know* as practically useful, and fight continually against it. This very day, though annoyed by the crowds of people rushing to or from their favourite preachers, I have just returned from my daily walk of seven miles; not much certainly, but as much as I can find spirits for. And, by the way, this walk lying by accident through Morningside, on returning about 4 P.M. I met——*Whom?*

This question, for fear you should think my story about the

mammoth slip of paper tending to the fabulous, I will answer on a sheet from that same slip; for indeed I am now left without any other.

1°.—Who was it that I met in Morningside? It was a person whom, I think, you know by sight, and certainly our Tipperary M. does—viz., Mr. Watson of Princes Street, the bookseller, so famous for his unrivalled series of autographs, stretching (I believe) through forty or more folios. But what do *you* care for this man of forty folios, or for the forty folios themselves, any more than for the forty thieves of "Ali Babi?" True; and pity 'tis 'tis true. But why I mentioned him is, because he recalled to me a fact which perhaps I ought to have reported. Saturday last but one, or (more briefly) on the *penultimate* Saturday—viz., Saturday the 16th of June—on returning from my seven miles, I found on my table a note from Mr. Josiah Quincey, jun., mentioning that he had gone over to Mavis Bush for the purpose of calling on you and Emily; that, on returning much disappointed, he had fallen in with Mrs. Chambers, who communicated my address, and that, of course, he was languishing to see me. What could I do? Ranging, as I do so often, amongst people eaten up with Sabbatic scruples and superstitions, I could not venture to call on a Sunday without special permission. So I staid till Monday. But on Monday came a point-blank necessity for attending to a matter of pressing business. Seldom comes such a day to me; but now it really did. On Monday night, with dolorous apostrophes to you two in Lincolnshire as agents indispensable to the conducting of my correspondence, but mysteriously absent, I scratched out a note as friendly as was due to the brother (or *nephew* is it?) of our old and most obliging correspondent, Miss Q. These Quinceys, you are aware, compose a most distinguished family in Boston. I sent an intelligent messenger with this note, able to give discretional answers upon any question or difficulty that might arise. But all was labour lost. At the Royal Hotel, all that could be told of Mr. Josiah's movements was, that at nine o'clock on Monday morning, being the deathless day of Waterloo, he had departed this life—no, what nonsense I am talking!—not this life, but this city, for a better—no; not for a better, but for a worserer—viz., Greenock. This seemed to imply embarkation for America. And so, in fact, it did, as I learned just now from Mr. Watson. Upon him did Mr. Josiah,

jun., call ; and I am bound to speak gratefully of the lamentations which he uttered to Mr. Watson, and thought it worth his while to reiterate more than either once or twice, upon the bad luck which had caused our household to be so widely scattered —viz., one in Tipperary, two in Lincolnshire, one in Edinburgh, one in Brazil, and one in Lahore (is it not ?), or in that neighbourhood. On the whole, therefore, if either of you ever speculated on becoming Mrs. Josiah (or Jeremiah, for by the glory of his lamentations *that* must be his true name), I hold that your ticket has sunk in the market by 50 per cent. But, lastly, and very seriously, I 'am sorry, and most sincerely so, that we all lost this opportunity of showing civilities to the representative of a family so advantageously known in America by patriotic services, and to ourselves in particular known by so continued a series of most obliging attentions.

II°.—Having thus been led casually to report one article of news, I am led by the contagious spirit of gossip into telling a second. I have received of late several letters from strangers of the old fashion so well known to you, but from new people. I think I cannot have mentioned them to you. But one I *will* mention, which I received last Wednesday from a fair *incognita*. She gives me an address in Sloane Street, Chelsea, and I am already gratified by the interest she expresses in some part of my writings, so amiably is it expressed, with so much fervour and simplicity, and wearing all the marks of sincerity.

Love to Miss Gee and to Emily.

I should pity you for having such a task of reading before you as this long, long letter offers, only that it is really within the power of people with the half of your deciphering skill to read my writing fluently and without checks.

I have several things to say, and will write again immediately. —Ever most affectionately yours, THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

It is now 9 P.M. on Sunday night. My letter is going to the General Post-Office, but I doubt its going to-night.

Sunday Night, June 6, 1858.

MY DEAR EMILY,—I forward to you Mr. Prof. Alexander's note to myself from the Coburg Hotel, in that tip-top quarter of London West, Charles Street, Grosvenor Square.

I shall write *to-morn's morn* to our new friend the Coburg—a

theatre of that name I once knew, but never yet a hotel. Indeed, I knew the theatre only too well—viz., by living in too close neighbourhood to its savage nightly uproars, and especially in those days to the midnight explosion of the Kremlin.

To return, however, from the Kremlin to the note of *to-morn's morn*, I shall say to Mr. Alexander, that according to your original plan, if not miscalculated by me, your return to Lasswade would *at any rate* fall upon the longest day (June 21, 22) or thereabouts. To-morrow completes the first *ephthemeron*, or series of seven days in June. Now in twenty-one days there is a first, a second, a third such phenomenon. One is gone, and pretty nearly irrevocable. A second would reasonably be consumed in exchanging kisses, summoning the washerwoman, and paying our "little accounts." So that the total controversy and polemics would settle upon the third ephthemeron, and *that* only—namely, from midnight on the 14th of June to midnight on the 21st. Within these two limits lies the whole range of your possible sacrifices on behalf of Mr. Alexander. And of course you would first choose to ascertain from Mr. A. himself whether any sacrifice at all would promote his convenience. I will hold myself in readiness according to what I hear on this great argument from Boston.

The next is a letter of somewhat similar character:—

42 Lothian Street,
Friday, December 10, 1858.

My Dear Sir,—I was sorry to hear—which, until Wednesday night, I had no opportunity of hearing—that you had called upon me, and had sent messages (one or more) ineffectually. My landlady's sister could inform you that I had gone out, but not the *whither;* and if, upon her suggestion, any letter was addressed to me at Lasswade, it will have travelled in the very opposite direction to the true one.

I write, move, do all things under a most distressing bodily affection, one which is properly a surgical case; intermittingly it gives me much pain, but (which is more relevant to the purpose before me) much nervous impatience. The shortest letter is an oppression to me; and for the last four months I have felt myself compelled to retreat from all conversation or personal

communications with visitors. Pardon me my apparent discourtesy, and I will endeavour to make amends by the circumstantiality of my *written* explanations. Even this mode of communication has its own separate irritations, for the pens that one is now forced to use—any at least that fall in *my* way—are as flexible as the poker—not more so certainly in any case, but (when specially good) not less.

I presume that the call with which you favoured me had reference to the "Pope" paper in the "Encyclopædia Brittanica." In a brief note of yours several months back, though not at this moment before me, I remember that you alluded *inter alia* to the case of the Blounts as a chapter in Pope's life about which much scandal had gathered, much malicious guessing, and (of late years I suppose it has been proved) much downright misstatement. Without pretending to any minute acquaintance with the successive stages of research and discovery amongst the students of Pope's biography, I have a vague impression that Mr. Carruthers of Inverness has established the fact (has he not?) of two separate Blount families contemporary with Pope, and I believe more or less connected by friendship with Pope; and such a fact, interesting for itself, but more especially if it has led to any of the conjectural scandal disfiguring his memory, is certainly entitled to a pointed notice. Other questions connected with Pope and Pope's era, and useful towards a full appreciation of the man or of the author, might take their place reasonably enough in a few supplementary paragraphs to the paper as it now stands. But, as an addition, by its nature and its urgency outrunning any other, I should propose to close with about a single page indicating and appraising Pope's place in the long development of literature, and the memorable stage which he reached for himself, and suggested to others, of a poetry pretending to no altitudes of inspiration, but dwelling and abiding within the tents of ordinary life.

That the functions of Pope have never been truly understood, not even by himself, seems to me attested by expressions in use amongst us having the currency of proverbs. One thing let me add: such a winding-up, assigning to Pope his true place in the evolution of our literature, would reflect upon the article a colouring of meditativeness and deliberation which (if I remember) at present it wants.

Remains to ask

1. What space } is disposable for this addition?
2. —— time }

As to the first, my wishes are moderate enough—three pages of the "Encyclopædia" size will suffice. But as to time, I should wish to hear your own estimate of what is possible. I have never been able to write fast, and am now less able than ever.—Pray believe me, ever very truly yours,

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

The following letter to the Rev. Francis Jacox also bears so far in illustration of the characteristics of my father just dwelt on, that it may perhaps be not unfitly inserted here:—

December 20, 1851.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am not much better able to write letters *now* than when heretofore I delegated to my daughter Florence the duty of replying to your kind communications. But the *persistency* (to speak neologically) of your kindness, and of your determination not to be offended at what, under ordinary circumstances, would have seemed slights, absolutely coerces me into writing with my own hand.

I observe by your reference to Gombroon, an island about which that wretched Dane, Malte Brun, lived and died in the grossest ignorance (what Lord Brougham would describe as "crass" ignorance), that you have been looking into Mr. Hogg's "Instructor." If you are in search of geographical novelties, be assured that it is the best of guides. I doubt whether anywhere you would find the *ubi* of Gombroon indicated within a thousand leagues. Now Hogg at least shows on which side of the equator it lies, which really is more than can be found in the very best charts authorised by the Admiralty.

Yet, and except always for these geographical merits, do I otherwise ratify with my sanction the papers of mine in the "Instructor," or rejoice that any friend reads them? Really I do not know. I compose with prodigious difficulty at this time; and with still greater difficulty I come to any judgment afterwards upon what I have written. But this I *do* know, that here, as always, I have written my best. That is, given the conditions under which I wrote, which conditions might chance to be very unfavourable—hurry, for example, exhaustion, dis-

satisfaction with my subject, &c., and latterly overwhelming nervousness—these allowed for, always I have striven to write as well as I could. And in this case, dreadful as are my nervous hindrances, there are two pointed advantages. I write about facts in the first place: and secondly, the narrow limits of this particular journal *enforce* brevity; and, where there is no choice, *that* makes one anxiety the less. The act of choosing brings with it a dreadful nervous distraction.

Well, I have thus written a letter, which so rarely I do. And the fault of it being that it is too exclusively about my own concerns, let me mend that fault, or balance it, by saying a word or two on a matter concerning yourself. We (that is my three daughters and myself) were all sorry to find that you had formerly visited Edinburgh, and perhaps (if we read you rightly) even Lasswade, without calling on us. You will not do so again; for now, so far from needing an introducer, you have power to introduce others. If you like music and laughter, you will hear a good deal of both from my daughters. We can also show you Roslin, not two miles distant; and take you on Sunday to a pretty little Episcopal Chapel at Dalkeith (if you do not object to a *soupçon* of Puseyism); and we can introduce you to the famous grounds of Hawthornden on *any* day, whereas the base public, that has no wedding-garment to show, can enter only on Wednesdays, in company with Jews, Pagans, Pariahs, Radicals, Red Republicans, and other *canaille*. Finally, which may be of even more importance, we can offer you a bed.

Ever your faithful and affectionate servant,

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

My father's unfailing courtesy has been pleasantly noticed by several of our American visitors, and, among others, in the "Baltimore American," by Mr. Oliver White, who, in recording his impressions of a visit paid to us in 1854, amongst other things, made reference to his consideration for the feelings of those for whom sometimes it may be that too little consideration is shown:—

There was a few moments pause in the "table-talk," when

one of the daughters asked us our opinion of Scotland and the Scotch. De Quincey had been in a kind of reverie, from which the question aroused him. Turning to us, he said, in a kindly, half-paternal manner, "The servant that waits at my table is a Scotch girl. It may be that you have something severe to say about Scotland. I know that I like the English Church, but I never utter anything that might wound my servant. Heaven knows that the lot of a poor serving-girl is hard enough, and if there is any person in the world of whose feelings I am especially tender, it is of those of a female compelled to do for us our drudgery. Speak as freely as you choose, but please reserve your censure, if you have any, for the moments when she is absent from the room." *Un gentilhomme est toujours un gentilhomme*, a man of true sensibility and courtesy will manifest it on all occasions, towards the powerless as well as towards the strong. . . . For half an hour, at least, he talked as we never heard another talk. We have listened to Sir William Hamilton at his own fireside, to Carlyle walking in the parks of London, to Lamartine in the midst of a favoured few in his own house, to Cousin at the Sorbonne, and to many others, but never have we heard such sweet music of eloquent speech as then flowed from De Quincey's tongue. To attempt reporting what he said would be like attempting to entrap the rays of the sun. Strange light beamed from that grief-worn face, and for a little while that weak body, so long fed upon by pain, seemed to be clothed with supernatural youth.

On some occasions, however, we used to think, with some little amusement, this courtesy was not always appreciated, as in the case of an ignorant young girl just out of her village home, who, after a short time, left us for no assigned reason, but, on being questioned, confessed she was "feared o' Mr. de Quincey, he used such awfu' like language"—the awfu' like language being his gentle and quite needless explanations of why he wanted a scuttle of coals or a cup of coffee, which were given in language to which she certainly was not accustomed. To balance this, there was offered on one

occasion by an admirer in the same condition of life, the following tribute: "Ah, Mr. de Quincey, you are a great man, a very great man; *no* body can understand you!"

Many stories are told of the impressions that his careless, poverty-stricken attire and his odd ways made upon strangers—sometimes to his grievous inconvenience. This is one instance, which a friend recalls, relating to an invitation which Dr. R. had given to De Quincey when in Glasgow to visit him in Ayrshire:—

Without sending notice, the Opium-Eater arrived one day at the minister's lodgings when the minister was from home. The landlady, an old maid, very particular in her habits, was shocked by the aspect of the visitor, and still more when he insisted on being shown in that he might wait till Dr. R. returned next day. The old lady, who took him for a wandering vagrant, refused point-blank, and would not even let him cross the threshold to write a line telling Dr. R. that he had called. She offered, however, to bring, or rather to allow the lass to bring, the minister's writing-desk to the doorstep that De Quincey might pen his note there. When Dr. R. came home, it was to receive an indignant note from De Quincey, and to be horrified by the tale of how his illustrious visitor had been ignominiously turned away from his door.

His contributions to "Blackwood" and "Tait" were continued intermittently at all events up to 1849, the "Mail Coach" and the "Vision of Sudden Death" having appeared in the former in that year. During this Edinburgh period, too, he contributed at various times to "Blackwood" the following articles:—"On Milton," "On the Philosophy of Roman History," "Dinner, Real and Reputed," "The Opium Question," "Ricardo Made Easy," and others, which, to the honour of the readers of "Maga" let it be said, they knew well how to appreciate.

The remark already made by Professor Masson on the skilful manœuvring necessary in order to get De Quincey inveigled out to dinner, suggests our introducing here a confession on that subject from amongst his papers:—

In general, and I confess almost unavoidably, a dinner party is made into a regular scene of martyrdom. First comes the distress (to which all my experience has not quite reconciled me) of hearing one's own name carried forward by repeating footmen from station to station, as by some allegoric trumpet of fame, up flights of echoing stairs until it reaches a well-bred but slightly censorious drawing-room. Well, *that* may be borne, and by practice one learns even to view one's self as a phantom amongst phantoms; and for my own part, I put my trust in my tailor as a man likely to execute a bad coat, so as to secure a happy obscurity for one's mere personal pretensions. Oh, how often in passing up a long drawing-room I have wished for that benign cloud of concealment in which Virgil's Æneas was shrouded by his mamma! But next comes the dreadful question of precedency in going down to the dining-room; dreadful equally to host and guest. Dilemmas arise which not Thomas Aquinas, nor Clarencieux sitting in council with Garter-king-at-arms, has any power to settle; so nicely balanced are pretensions when they are of the same sort or sometimes so incommensurable. If the lord lieutenant of the county is amongst the company, he takes precedency of everybody, even of a man much higher in the peerage, because he represents the sovereign. That is a clear case; but a large majority of common cases would puzzle the Heralds' College. Now, what an invidious office does such a perplexity throw upon the poor host! He must decide between two parties, and probably offend both. For the guest with no more than a quiet self-estimation may see cause secretly to protest against the decision; and yet again, if a kind-hearted man, he is distressed by a preference which may inflict mortification upon others. Lastly comes the call for conversing with your next neighbour, which may be easy enough if your neighbour is at all practised in the difficult art of conversation. But to keep a ball flying when your neighbour cannot toss it back—ah, what a sad destiny is that! Another instance of a different kind are pretensions of a different sort.

A case from real life: scene, the Earl of Darnley's drawing room; time, five minutes before the announcement of dinner; Coleridge and Sir H. Davy. Which of these shall go first? A poet on the one side, a chemist on the other. Yes, says the court calendar, but Sir H. has a ticket from the Lord Chancellor certifying that he has been presented at court. Coleridge has none. Besides, you say, "Davy has been knighted." No; I beg your pardon; not yet. None of these things have glorified him. At this moment he is simply Mr. H. He is still simply a human being, with no need for a page to say, "Davy, thou art mortal!" "Well, but," says the attorney for Mr. H., "you are to consider that he is not a mere vulgar operative chemist, tarnished with soot from the furnace, or inventing cosmetics for ladies' lapdogs. He is a great discoverer, who has descended into the sublunary, who comes but rarely—a legislator, a philosopher. Whereas poets are common as fibs, endless as birds in spring, fugitive as fairs in autumn." Ay! but, on the other hand, the poet is also a philosopher. "Yes," replies Ignorance touched with malice, "but bad poetry combined with bad philosophy, will that avail against good chemistry combined with good philosophy?" No, my dear Ignorance, it will not, as you say. But then, how if the poetry (at that moment depressed) is really exquisite, and the philosophy (not then much known) so profound as to have a vital power securing for it a growing hostility and love thirty years after, when the chemist's science is eclipsed by superseding, and his philosophy has gone to the wall? Come now, again we are such and such, and there is a Rowland for every Oliver. "Well, then, it will come to be a question of age." But the men can't make affidavit of their ages, and Lord Darnley cannot send down to Cornwall for the baptismal certificate of Davy, nor to Devonshire for that of Coleridge. No; the sole resource is to send for a spelling-dictionary, when it will be found—oh, the varlet!—that C. ever was and will go before the D.'s.

To the Rev. Francis Jacox we are indebted for some genial glimpses of the Lasswade life, which we have much pleasure in inserting at this place:—

"It was on the 13th of July 1852 that I saw Mr. de

Quincey for the first time; but the welcome he gave me at this first meeting was that of an old friend.

"He showed interest in learning from how early a date my interest in him had been cherished. It must have been in the first year of my teens that I became acquainted with his name, as a youthful prodigy in Greek, whose feats of scholarship were commemorated to a class of very different scholars, in Kensington Grammar School, by the head-master (in my time), the Rev. W. H. Whitworth. For particulars we were referred to the 'Confessions of an English Opium-Eater;' and that author's consummate mastery of the English language, especially in the range of impassioned prose, was impressed upon us with admiring sympathy. It was not my good fortune to lay hands on the memorable volume until my school career was ending or ended; but when I did, there were mingled with the reading grateful memories of the man who commended its writer, and of the manner of the commendation. Between that time, however, and the period of my summer visit to Mavis Bush, Lasswade, my appetite for the author's *opera omnia* had been constantly growing by what it fed on; and when, a year or two before my becoming his guest, he had forwarded to me a list of his remembered and recognised contributions to periodical literature, with a view to collect and reprint them, or at least a selection from them, requesting me at the same time to make any additions to the list, if, from internal evidence, I could,—it was in my power to more than double the total. Many of the best and most characteristic of his anonymous essays he had clean forgotten, but there was no mistaking his sign

manual; and he was amusedly surprised at the voluminous expanse of his authorship.

"And now I was seated beside the author himself, a listener to the dulcet tones of that earnest but softly subdued voice, often tremulous with emphasis, and most musical when most melancholy. Gladly and gratefully would I have compounded for listening only. But Mr. de Quincey* was himself jealous of his rights as a listener too, even where, as in my case, those rights might have been absolutely renounced to our common advantage. Nothing could better manifest the innate courtesy, the even sensitive considerateness of the man, than his conduct in this respect. A master of the art of conversation, this he is on all sides known to have been; but I do not remember to have seen justice done to his surpassing attainments as a good listener. He was always for giving way; scrupulously on the watch for any, the slightest, token of interruption, objection, comment, assent, question, or answer, nothing could exceed the tone of unaffected deference with which he gave heed as well as ear to whatever his companion might have to say. Whether his talk was equal to that of Coleridge, or even was superior to it, may be a question that very few survivors now are competent to decide, or so much as to discuss. But if Madame de

* His name I write with a small *d* in the *de*, as he wrote it himself. He would not have wished it indexed among the D's, but the Q's. With all his sincere and pronounced regard for and admiration of Sara (Mrs Henry Nelson) Coleridge, he would have entirely declined to countenance her uniform style of writing and printing him, all in one word, or at one fell swoop, "Mr. Dequincey."

Staël was right in characterising S. T. C. as 'de monologue,' and so in implying his incapacity to listen patiently, his monopoly of the prerogative and privileges of harangue, then was Mr. de Quincey the flat opposite of that other 'old man eloquent' in this defect or effect, or, as Polonius might word it, effect defective.

"The same inborn and inbred spirit of benignant courtesy was perpetually cropping up in other ways —byways some of them, but leading to the same conclusion. His manner to his three daughters, for instance, was the perfection of chivalric respect as well as affection. Very noticeable was his unfailing habit of turning courteously to them and explaining, in his own choicely finished and graphic diction, any casually employed term from the 'dead languages,' which presumably might lie outside the pale of ladies' lore. When I chanced, at dinner that day, to recall the pronounced preference of his sometime friend and almost neighbour, the self-styled Robert the Rhymer, who lived at the Lakes,— 'But gooseberry-pie is best,'—at once the father turned to the daughters to remind them that Southey was here pleasantly parodying a line of Pindar's, which might furnish water-drinkers with a plea for all occasions, and Temperance Societies with a motto for all time.

"While sitting with him alone after dinner, he gave me an account of the lets and hindrances which impeded his design of republishing select volumes of his miscellaneous works—a design which was mainly strengthened and justified by the success of the American edition, published by Messrs Ticknor & Fields, eight volumes of which he showed me with obvious gratification, qualified though it might be by his too conscious ex-

clusion from actual editorial supervision. Grateful he nevertheless was to the enterprising Boston firm for collecting what he had hitherto lacked energy to collect. 'I must explain to you,' he said, 'that I have suffered for the last ten years and more from a most dreadful ailment, to an extent of which I never heard in any other instance'—a stagnation of blood in the legs, resulting in an effect upon the system of 'intense, intolerable torpor,' during which it was impossible to hold, or at any rate to guide, a pen; the torpor being, however, compatible with a 'frightful recurrence of long-ago imagery and veriest trifles of the past.' The tendency to sleep was irresistible, but the waking sensations made up a crisis of torture. Relief he found, but slight relief only, in walking from six to seven miles on an average daily. But then the weariness of having to walk so far for a relief so slight! So many literary schemes he had in contemplation—an elaborate history, and a historical novel among the number—some of which, if not all of which, he would fain finish before he died. Yet of these not one was so much as begun. Could he but begin at once! Referring to Wordsworth's happy immunity from distracting anxieties and carking cares, his lettered ease and tranquil surroundings, Mr. de Quincey exclaimed, 'Heavens! had I but ever had his robust strength, and healthy stomach, and sound nerves, with the same glorious freedom from all interruptions and embarrassment! . . . But, in point of fact, never have I written but against time, pressed by overbearing anxieties, and latterly more especially pressed down by physical suffering.' For the last six months he had reverted

to the use of opium in small doses; but any mitigation of his malady it might afford was avowedly counterbalanced by the specific suffering that it in turn inflicted. As to the suggested employment of an amanuensis, he replied that he never could dictate, and that his suffering would be increased by the sense of implicating another in the imbroglio of his nervous vacillations.

"Of current literature, and of men of letters past and present, he talked on that day, and on subsequent ones, with freedom and vivacity. With interest he heard that Professor Wilson, ailing as he was, had been driven into Edinburgh expressly to record his vote for Macaulay; and much he had to tell me of Christopher North and his ways, and of their joint association with the Lakes and with 'Blackwood.' One quarrel he had with his old comrade-in-arms—for that magazine was politically a militant one—was his trick of spoiling a story in the telling. 'For example, when I had lodgings over Waterloo Bridge, near the Surrey Theatre, in 1814, every night towards twelve o'clock a terrific din was caused in and around the playhouse by the explosion scene in a piece that involved the burning of the Kremlin; regularly, to a minute, that explosion awoke a contiguous cock; this cock, in full crow, awoke another; the second cock a third, and the definite three an indefinite chorus, or antiphony, of others; which chorus, again, awoke and provoked a corresponding series of dogs; and so on with other clamorous voices in succession—gradually swelling the aggregate of tumultuous forces. Now when Professor Wilson, who found my story of the midnight din amusing, retold it

in his own vigorous but inaccurate fashion, he spoilt the effect by making the uproar synchronous, instead of gradually successive.' John Galt was another of the 'Blackwood' staff discussed, and my host spoke with lively appreciation of the 'Annals of the Parish,' the peculiar interest of which he ascribed to the character of the narrator, as in Goldsmith's 'Vicar of Wakefield,' where we are entertained by Dr. Primrose's shrewd insight into his wife's weak points, while he seems to have no inkling of his own absurdities in the polemics of deuterogamy. Of another contributor, the late R. P. Gillies, he spoke with wistful regret, feelingly deploring the straits and shifts to which that ill-starred scholar had been reduced. This, probably, may have been the friend who wrote from the precincts of Holyrood to Mr. de Quincey, to announce his enforced sojourn in that sanctuary, and to whom the reply came, in a style that savours of Charles Lamb, 'I will be with you on Monday, D.V.; but on Tuesday, D.V. or not.' Of Sir William Hamilton much was said, and the strain then heard was in a higher mood. But his friend and critic deemed him less subtle than Ferrier, though more comprehensive, and took exception to his 'unnecessary display of erudite quotations' all to back up a truism. Dr. Chalmers came in for a word of admiration, on the score of his broad spirit of liberality, and his tolerance of that German theology which, said Mr. de Quincey, 'I studied at my peril thirty or forty years ago.' Admiration was expressed, too, for the 'Christian Year.' Isaac Taylor's works had been read, but without much sense of a remunerative return. 'It is one of the afflictions of life' (said he, with a gentle

smile), 'that one must read thousands of books only to discover that one need not have read them.'

"Of Talfourd, Mr. de Quincey spoke with evident regard, but thought his 'Ion' considerably overrated. He was emphatic in praise of Harriet Lee's 'The German's Tale,' as being almost unequalled in narrative skill, so artistic is the arrangement of the story, and so exquisite the delineation of Josephine's character. 'I had believed Miss Lee to have been dead long since, or I should certainly have called upon her in Bath, to offer her my personal respects and to express my gratification at her intellectual prowess.' As, to his own regret, he had assumed Miss Lee to be dead, equally so, in another case, he had assumed Mr. Gillman to be alive when the review of the 'Life of Coleridge' was contributed to 'Blackwood.' 'Lockhart wrote to Wilson, "What does De Quincey mean by attacking in that sort of way a man in his grave?" Now this, when told me, was the first intimation I had of Mr. Gillman's death.'

"He owned to a decided disrelish for Miss Edgeworth's novels, assuming, as they seem to do, the existence of no higher virtues than prudence, discretion, and the like sober sisterhood. Both her and Lady Morgan he reckoned inferior in racy Irish portraiture to Maturin (the 'Wild Irish Boy'). Dickens he complained of as repeating himself in 'Bleak House,' then in course of publication; and a heavier cause of complaint lay in the popular author's dead set against the 'upper classes,' as such, and his glorification at their expense of the idealised working-man. But Dickens he unhesitatingly preferred, because of his genial humanity, to Thackeray, whom I in vain tried to vindicate from the

charge of a prevailing 'spirit of caustic cynicism.' Mr. de Quincey appeared to regard as simply a crotchety illusion or a blind partiality my remonstrances in favour of the author of 'Pendennis,' when for him I claimed the merit of supreme tenderness and benignity of heart, as well as sarcasm in its severest and irony in its most subtle forms. It has always been a puzzle to me how such a gracious nature, so delicately responsive to every fine touch, so acutely predisposed to the appeals of genuine pathos, should have missed the force and beauty of what is tender in Thackeray.

"I have a note of a sauntering to and fro with Mr. de Quincey in his garden on the forenoon of the 22d, when more than once he was asked for alms by some passing mendicant, and each time with success. There was something at once deprecating and deferential in the tones with which he accosted the applicants severally, whether man or woman, as though he were in fear of hurting their feelings by putting them under an obligation. It was the same when, in my walks with him along the country roads, he was similarly beset. In every case he gave at once, and without inquiry or inspection. He had in former years been shocked by the vehemence with which Edward Irving, as they were walking together in London by night, upon one occasion repelled and reproached a street-beggar. He would probably have owned to being equally shocked by Archbishop Whately's sternly systematic repression of any weakness for such casual relief. But with Whately he would have had very little in common.

"During the days that I was his guest, I could not but take note of the vicissitudes of temperament and spirits

to which he was subject. For some time in the morning of each day he appeared to be grievously depressed and prostrate; the drowsy torpor of which he complained so keenly was then in fullest possession of him, and futile were all endeavours to rouse or to interest him until that tyranny was overpast. Sometimes it extended further on into the day; and more than once, when there were visitors at his table, he appeared to be utterly baffled in every effort he made to shake off that oppressive lethargy, as certainly the most persistent and adventurous of those visitors were baffled in their endeavours to cheer him up and to draw him out. In fact, had I seen him, at this period of his life, only in company, I should not have seen him at all. It was when alone with him that I learnt to know him. A walk in the fresh air would by degrees revive him; but nothing could I observe so effectual to refresh and reinvigorate him, no spell so potent to disperse his languor, as a cup of good coffee. I have seen it act upon him like a charm, bracing up his energies, clearing up his prospects, accelerating his speech as well as the march of his ideas, and inspiring him with a new fund of that eloquence which held the listener rapt, yet swayed him to and fro at its own sweet will. The eye that had been so heavy, so clouded, so filmy, so all but closed—the eye that had looked so void of life and significance, that had no speculation in it, nothing but a weary look of uttermost lassitude and dejection—now kindled with lambent fire, sparkled with generous animation, twinkled with quiet fun. The attenuated frame seemed to expand, and the face, if still pallid, revealed new capacities of spiritual expression, the most noteworthy a dreamy far-off look, as though

holding communion with mysteries beyond our ken, with realities behind the veil.

"In his hours of languishing, when 'drooping woful wan, like one forlorn,' his utterance reminded me of Wordsworth's lines:—

> "His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,
> But each in solemn order followed each,
> With something of a lofty utterance drest—
> Choice words and measured phrase, above the reach
> Of ordinary men; a stately speech."

"Music he spoke of as a 'necessity' to his daily life. If ever again he visited London, it was his hope to frequent the opera, though as to the theatres, he felt no kind of attraction in anything *they* could promise him. The idea of seeing 'Lear' on the stage, environed by the surroundings of mere pleasure-seekers and frivolous playgoers, seemed to him profanity outright. He adverted, however, with cordial admiration to the 'Antigone' of Miss Helen Faucit, of whom, and of her distinguished husband (Mr. Theodore Martin), he spoke in terms of personal regard. The latter he had recently met, I think he said at Mrs. Crowe's, one of the most intimate, at this time, of his literary friends in Edinburgh. To Mrs. Henry Siddons, too, as a graceful, aerial actress, he referred in terms of lively appreciation. Fond as he was of music, he was not often in the room while the two younger of his daughters played or sang during my stay; but he was a good listener, for all that, in his 'den' downstairs, and would comment on his favourites among their pieces when he rejoined us. Devout was his reverence for Beethoven, who alone, I used to think, was capable, among the great composers,

of setting his dream fugues to music, or of interpreting their hidden mysteries and complex transitions in strains of some choral symphony. Mendelssohn he had not as yet come really to admire; not even the 'Songs without Words' seemed to speak home to his heart of hearts; and alike to 'May-bells' and 'Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast,' warbled by sweet sister-voices, he could listen without a thrill. Bellini was so far a favourite with him that he often asked his daughters Florence and Emily to give him the well-worn 'Deh Conte;' nor would he tire of gems from the 'Don Giovanni,' or of 'Questo Semplice,' or of such time-tried strains as 'Time hath not thinned,' 'O lovely peace,' 'In chaste Susanna's praise,' 'Down the dark waters,' 'By limpid streams,' 'And will he not come again,' 'Birds blithely singing,' &c. He exulted in the fervour of expression and the musician-like touch and facility of execution with which his youngest daughter, still under professional instruction, rendered Beethoven's 'Sonata Pathetica,' Weber's 'Invitation,' and Pergolesi's 'Gloria in Excelsis.' When he had written to invite me to visit him, he had promised me, if I liked such things, music and laughter in abundance, on the part of his three daughters. And well was the promise kept. Yet did he not promise me two things—music *and* laughter? In effect I found it to be all one, for the laughter itself was music.

"His eldest daughter's delicate health was at this period a matter of grave anxiety to him; and the doctor's report of organic mischief in progress at the lungs overwhelmed him with solicitude and misgivings. She kept house for him, and he expressed to me, with the most charming naïveté and innocent candour, his supreme

amazement at the economical tact with which, while exercising all the year round a quiet system of modest hospitality, she contrived to make both ends meet. Comfortable as she made his home, and happy as she and her two sisters made himself, he yet lamented piteously the inroads on his time caused by visitors. His only salvation, he said, for this chronic curse of distracting interruptions would entail the loss to his daughters of their only relaxation. He lamented, too, the smallness of his 'den,' overcrowded with books and papers. In this room he had left himself space only to slide along to his table through piles of volumes. His daughters told me this was the first house he had not built them out of, with these ever accumulating books. Thrice in Westmoreland had such been their fate; and they laughed at their own imprudence in leaving a bath in this room of his, which he instantly utilised past recovery as a receptacle for literary matter, heaped up, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. They laughed, too, over his quaint trick of carrying off every scrap of paper he could lay his hands on, any old envelope or newspaper—not unfrequently on the bland pretext of 'burning it for you,' in that fire of his which was never allowed to go out the whole year round, and which, in a little room so densely charged with combustible matter, was to them a source of some natural anxiety.

"It was on July 22d, that I repeated my visit, remaining with him at Mavis Bush until the 27th. Meanwhile, he had been gratified by a visit from Mr. Fields of Boston, U.S.A., who, on leaving, had put into Miss de Quincey's hands a cheque for a part of the profits accruing from the sale of the American edition of his

works—to be kept from her father's knowledge till he should have returned home from seeing his American guest to the coach. Miss Martineau had spent the afternoon with him the day before, and he spoke of her with real liking in his words and manner. If her size had impressed him, so had her quietness of demeanour, and, adopting Elia's phrase, he designated her the gentle giantess. She, on her part, had been pleasantly impressed by his voice, and had exclaimed to his eldest daughter apart, alluding to her own deafness, 'Oh, what a voice! so clear, so soft, so sweet! so delightful a contrast to the way people have of bawling to me.'

"On the 25th, he hoped to have taken me to morning service at the Episcopal Chapel on the Duke of Buccleuch's grounds, Dalkeith, but was not well enough at the appointed hour, and I accompanied his three daughters to the chapel, driving through Bonnyrigg, and Lowton, and coming within view of Cockpen Tower and of the Lammermoor hills by the way. He talked of the service on our return, and showed how far his sympathies went with a moderately ornate ritual. Sound Church of England man as it was his great right and his pride to call himself, he avowed that his antagonism to Rome was mainly as a political system. On this Sunday afternoon he avowed the vehement hatred he had always cherished for the Judaic continuance of a Sabbath in the Judaic sense. Sabbath he hailed as a sublime word, but its exclusive beauty and significance were ruined, to his sense, by the 'base universal usage of it on the most trivial occasions.' For some Presbyterian ministers, notably Dr. Hanna, with whom he had agreeable relations in contributing to the 'North British Review,'

his regard was unaffectedly cordial. It must be remembered that a Scottish Broad Church party, such as could better have claimed his sympathies as a party, was hardly then in existence. The Norman Macleods and the Tultochs, as a power in the Kirk, were yet to come. He was curious to know more about Professor Maurice, who 'has been talked of to me as the greatest man in the Church of England,'—but who thus far had failed to impress him with a sense of real or definite power. All seemed so indefinite when looked closely into. What seemed firm ground gave way beneath your tread. As to Charles Kingsley and the 'Christian Socialists,' 'I am puzzled to know what in the world they would be at.' Mr. Gladstone's splendid powers had a charm for him: 'But what am I to think (1852) of his sympathies with a party abroad which at home would be identified with extreme democracy?' Not that extreme democracy in politics, any more than abstract atheism as such, was to Mr. de Quincey otherwise than philosophically interesting. One of the periodicals of the day which he seemed to read with great zest was 'The Leader,' of the editor of which, Mr. G. H. Lewes, he spoke with inquiring eagerness. During our walk together into Edinburgh on the day of my finally quitting Mavis Bush, he expatiated with unprecedented animation on German theology of the advanced school, and freely recognised the 'enormity' of the difficulties which rigid orthodoxy had to confront. Passing on to speak of practical difficulties, he said, 'Frightfully perplexed I am, to this hour, as to what constitutes the so-called *appropriation* of the benefits of Christ's death. Never could I get any one to clear it up to me. Coleridge was utterly vague on the subject.

He talked all about it and about it, but never talked it out, that I could discover. Often have I discussed the question with my mother, a clear-headed and thoughtful woman, devoted to the Evangelical system, and a devout supporter of "The Record"—which paper I honour, as, in the other extreme, but for the same reason, I do "The Leader," for its candid and obvious earnestness in enforcing the views it has so sincerely at heart—but she would utterly fail to comprehend my difficulties. "My dear child," she would repeat, "you have simply to trust in the blood of Christ." "Very well," I would reply, "and I am quite willing; I reverence Christ; but what does this trusting mean? How am I to know exactly what to do? Upon what specifically am I to take hold to support me when flesh and heart faileth, in the hour of death, and at the day of judgment?" Countless different schemes there are to expound this doctrine of trust and of appropriation; but they remind me of the ancilia at Rome, the eleven copies of the sacred shield or palladium: to prevent the true one being stolen, the eleven were made exactly like it. So with the *true* doctrine of the atonement: it is lurking among the others that look like it, but who is to say *which* of them all it is?'

"After taking coffee with me that evening, Mr. de Quincey surpassed himself in copious eloquence and vivid variety of discourse, from grave to gay, from lively to severe. He talked of the history he proposed to write—a 'philosophical history of England, perhaps up to the period when Macaulay begins.' The novel he had in contemplation was to be about two prisoners in Austria, in the time of Maria Theresa. He said of his

translated novel, 'Walladmor,' that it arose out of a hasty review of the German original inserted in the 'London Magazine.' Taylor & Hessey being struck with the extracts as he had Englished them, commissioned him to translate the complete work. The complete work, he said, turned out to be complete trash; but he did his best, partly recast the story, and gave more point to the conversations. It found a few admirers, among whom it was gratifying to him to reckon Dora Wordsworth (Mrs. Quillinan).

"As I walked with him along Princes Street to the Mound on his way home, I noticed the nervous solicitude with which he refrained from any gesture while passing a cabstand, that might seem to warrant any driver in concluding himself summoned and engaged. Some unhappy experience of a mistake of this kind may have been the secret of his disquiet, for evidently he entertained a dread of the 'overbearing brutality of these men.' He spoke of his short-sightedness, which at Oxford had been so marked, that he was rumoured to be a bit of a Jacobin because he failed to 'cap' the Master of his college (Worcester) when he met him, only from sheer inability to recognise him by sight. We paused to look at the display of French and German books in Seton's window, and he would willingly have lingered there till sunset, glancing from author to author, with a word for (or against) each. Seeing in Bell & Bradfute's window a copy of Hawthorne's 'Mosses,' about which I had been talking to his daughters, I went in to buy it, he readily undertaking the light porterage; and it led him to talk of Hawthorne's genius, and to mention a recent visit of Emerson's,—to neither

of whom could he accord quite the degree of admiration claimed for them by the more thoroughgoing of their respective admirers.* Our way lay through George Square to the Meadows, and at the end of 'Lovers' Walk' he insisted on my not incurring the fatigue of accompanying him further. It was between eight and nine on tha lovely July evening that I took leave—my last leave—of the man to whom I owed so much. At the very moment of parting, all seemed to me like a dream: that we had ever met, that we were now parting. Could it all be but the baseless fabric of a vision, and was this the break-up, to leave not a rack behind?

> "The old man still stood talking by my side;
> But now his voice to me was like a stream
> Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;
> And the whole body of the man did seem
> Like one whom I had met with in a dream."

"The parting was over, and he went on his way. Lingering, I watched that receding figure, as it dimmed in the distance. The last I saw of him, he had opened Hawthorne's book, and went along reading as he walked. In that attitude I lost sight of him. He went on his way, and I saw him no more.

"FRANCIS JACOX."

In the year 1849, a new and fruitful literary connection had been opened up. As it led to the issue of the "Collected Writings"—an enterprise in the circumstances as precarious as it was praiseworthy—we are

* Later than this, Mr. de Quincey read the "Scarlet Letter" and other works of Hawthorne with great access of admiration. —Ed.

glad to be able to give an account of it in the words of Mr. James Hogg himself, in another chapter. This, however, seems the proper place to interject two glimpses of visits to "the old man eloquent" at Lasswade, which have left their record. In the autumn of 1852, we find Miss Mitford thus writing to Mrs. Hoare, and bringing into momentary conjunction two great names in literature which suggest more of a common interest than many others :—

"Did I tell you that Mr. Fields expects to bring Mr. Hawthorne to England with him in the spring? And did I also say that the last act of my excellent friend, before leaving England, was to carry to Mr. de Quincey, in Scotland, the author's profits of the seven volumes of his collected works, which he (Mr. Fields) had collected with so much care and pains, and edited himself? This piece of generosity, unprecedented in any publisher, English or American, gave great pleasure to the 'Opium-Eater,' whom Mr. Fields describes as the most courtly gentleman that he has seen in Europe."

Again, in the winter of 1853, Miss Mitford writes to Miss Goldsmid :—

"Two or three of my friends have visited Mr. de Quincey at Lasswade, where he now lives (did Miss Caroline see him with poor Dr. Mainzer?); and they all say it is the strangest mixture,—of an appearance so neglected that he looks like an old beggar, of manners so perfect that they would do honour to a prince, and of conversation unapproached for brilliancy. He confessed to one of my friends, who saw him on a bad day, that he could only quiet his nerves by opium—so that he has not left it off.

His daughter Margaret, my correspondent, whose letters are as charming as her father's books, is going to be married to a young Scotchman who has bought land in Tipperary,—a venture; but a genial young couple may, I think, find and make friends among the Irish."

Mr. Fields himself, in a lecture on De Quincey which he delivered in New York in November last year, spoke with fine appreciation of many traits in De Quincey, and gave an account of the visit to Mavis Bush referred to above. A few sentences from the lecture, as condensed by an American journal, we may be allowed to give here :—

Pale he was, with a head of wonderful size, which served to make more apparent the inferior dimensions of his body, and a face which lived the sculptured past in every lineament from brow to chin. One seeing him would surely be tempted to ask who he was that took off his hat with such grave politeness, remaining uncovered if a lady were passing almost until she was out of sight, and would get for an answer likely enough, "Oh, that is little De Quincey, who hears strange sounds and eats opium. Did you ever see such a little man?" Little he was, indeed, like Dickens and Jeffrey, the latter of whom had so little flesh that it was said his intellect was indecently exposed. He evinced the double eccentricity of genius and opium, kept his money in his hat and his manuscripts in a bathing-tub, and otherwise was guilty of strange things. It seems a little singular that one who was such a perfect master of the English language as De Quincey should never have been heard of by M. Taine, should have been thought dead by people in Edinburgh when he was living within ten miles of the town, and should have been otherwise ludicrously overlooked in his own time. It was De Quincey who invented the word "parvanimity," as opposed to magnanimity; and the word deserves as much to be kept as Bentham's "international." It was when De Quincey was thirty-five years of age that the "Confessions of an Opium-Eater" appeared in the old "London Magazine,"

simultaneously with one of Dickens's pieces, which lost, probably, some of its brilliancy by the contact. At this time De Quincey's fortune had just been dissipated through the failure of a relation, and thenceforward he supported himself and his wife and children by his pen. He would go for days without eating, supporting life on opiates.

Mr. Fields visited De Quincey in 1852, when he was living in a little cottage ten miles out of Edinburgh. He had upon his forehead the "alabaster shine" which Mr Fields had often noticed in the faces of opium-eaters. As he expressed his feelings, "It was as though there were a nondescript animal gnawing at his vitals," which he was powerless to subdue. He told of a row which Christopher North once had with a Frenchman in the theatre. The Frenchman was demonstrative, and attracted attention, so North told him to be quiet, and as soon as they got outside they would "settle it." "Yes," said Mr. Fields, "and what then?" "Then," returned De Quincey, gazing vaguely into the distance, "the Professor closed both the little Frenchman's eyes, and, his vision being eliminated, the conflict ended." De Quincey insisted on accompanying Mr. Fields back to Edinburgh on foot, and did it, although it was so late that they did not reach the town till morning.

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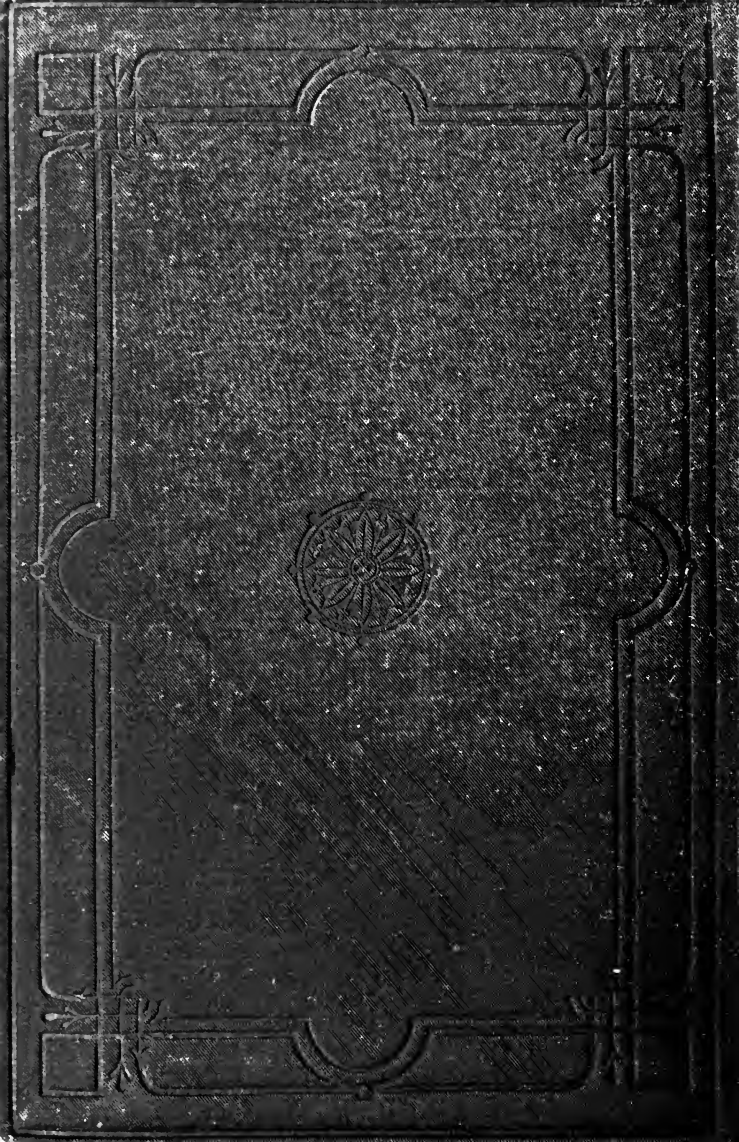
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